

---

# **A. T. ARIYARATNE COLLECTED WORKS**

---

**VOLUME VI**

**EDITED BY  
NANDASENA RATNAPALA**



A Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha Publication





COLLECTED WORKS  
VOLUME VI



**A. T. ARIYARATNE**

---

# **COLLECTED WORKS**

## **VOLUME VI**

*Edited by*  
***Nandasena Ratnapala***

  
**VISHVA LEKHA**  
*Publishers*

41, Lumbini Avenue Ratmalana  
Sri Lanka : 1999

Collected Works Vol. 6 (A5)  
A. T. Ariyaratne

First edition September 1996

Second edition May 1999

©Copyright Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement

**ISBN 955-599-081-6**

Printed and bound in Sri Lanka  
by

  
**VISHVA LEKHA**  
*Printers*

41, Lumbini Avenue Ratmalana  
(Vishva Lekha, an Income Generating Project  
for Sarvodaya Village Development Services.)



## CONTENTS

### Preface

### Introduction

1. A People's Agenda for global awakening	1
2. Realistic approaches to the future available for the under-privileged	17
3. Some thoughts on youth - ending hunger.	32
4. Buddhism in the 21st Century	38
5. Sustainable village-based development - looking back at the Sarvodaya development experience in Sri Lanka	53
6. Tolerance as a positive characteristic for personal and structural change	68
7. Reaching the Poor - Experience of the N.G.O.s	84
8. Buddhist thought in Sarvodaya Practice	96
9. Acceptance speech delivered by Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne on the occasion of presenting the IL-GA Memorial Award for Public Service, Seoul, Korea, 2nd September 1995	116
10. Banking with the Poor - N.G.O.s and Banks	119
11. Towards a World of Spiritual Awakening and Sharing - Questions and Answers	125
12. Sarvodaya Shramadana - Sharing to Awaken All	133
13. Practical Non-violent responses to new forms of violence	142
14. Gandhi Memorial Lecture	151



## EDITOR'S NOTE

This is Volume VI of Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne's Collected Works. Volume I and II were edited by me with Introductions. Mr. A.M.B. Weligopola edited Volume III for which I supplied an Introduction. Professor D. J. Kalupahana added lustre to the Volume by supplying a thoughtful Afterword.

Volumes IV and V were edited by Messrs. B. A. Tennyson Perera and Jehan Perera. Two eminent scholars and Sarvodaya wellwishers, Professor Tarlok Singh and Professor Ralph Buultjens provided scholarly Introductions to these editions.

Volume VI as I have already pointed out, contains Dr. Ariyaratne's mature writings. I am sure, when looking at the dynamism of the man, this would not be the final edition of his Collected Works. I wish him good health and long life in the service of all mankind.

Let me offer a word of thanks to Mr. Susiri de Silva and Vishva Lekha for the interest shown and the excellent print.

- N.R.





## INTRODUCTION

Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne has matured immensely from the time he initiated his Sarvodaya philosophy three and a half decades ago. This maturity is observed in his modern writings. What he writes today is mellowed by his ever-widening experience and deepness of knowledge. Dr. Ariyaratne finds a distinction between knowledge and wisdom. We may be able to discover flashes of insight bordering on such wisdom in his writings included in this volume.

Insights were certainly discernible even in his early philosophy. When he was immediately inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, by the term Sarvodaya - the well-being of all; he re-interpreted it in the Sri Lankan Buddhist experience as the "awakening of all." Even here one could observe that flash of insight which enabled him to 'culturalise' Gandhi's term into one of our own; perhaps with a better and deeper meaning and significance.

This insight is often observed in the writings collected in this volume. For example now, when he talks of Buddhist philosophy and practice, his approach is not descriptive or anecdotal, but basically analytical. He is attempting to understand what Buddhist philosophy and practice could give the modern world. Sarvodaya in its most profound sense, he believes, is equal to the Buddha's objective of freeing all living beings from suffering, thus enabling them to reawaken themselves.

Modern problems confronted by most societies necessitate immediate solutions. Ariyaratne surveys the problem of the underprivileged going beyond conventional concepts with a commitment to find a lasting solution. In his mature wisdom he realises the importance of looking at problems from the point of view of those who are burdened or affected by problem itself: "We work among the poor, among victims of civil disturbance and war, internal and external refugees, orphaned children and widows, exploited women and children, ex-convicts and drug-addicts; the physically, mentally and socially disabled, the terminally sick and the elderly."

It is this vital aspect that has helped Ariyaratne and Sarvodaya to find practical solutions to pressing problems. The Movement has shared the experience of the very people who are affected by the problem. This had mellowed and deepened their vision. The community action carefully designed with the involvement of the people's participation mainly depending on the people to find out the solution themselves was basically constructed with gentle persuasion as the ensuing strategy. Ariyaratne identifies this as the positive alternative strategy that the modern world needs.

It is with this alternative strategy that a new social order could be created. That social order comes into being with an awakening process of individuals, families, communities, the nation and the world at large. It is a balanced development of human personality with all resources available.

The need for tolerance in such a new order creating a new man, and a new world is underscored in Ariyaratne's mature philosophy. Tolerance is interpreted as a basic state of the mind that accepts the right of every living thing to exist without wilful hindrances from others. In this interpretation he moves away from conventional definitions of tolerance. For him, tolerance towards all living beings is necessary. This goes beyond the oft - repeated meaning of tolerance affecting only human beings. The importance of a politics of tolerance in the present context of our world is repeatedly suggested by Ariyaratne.

Tolerance is the key to modern living - whether it is by oneself, or in a community or in a nation, or finally as a member of not only the human species, but with all other living and non-living beings. It is here that the individual development expounded by Ariyaratne in the early Sarvodaya philosophy becomes important. Individual or personality development begins first in the family; then in the community, the nation and the entire world (Vishvaya). This was envisaged by him then, and now he has realised that - with a deeper vision. It is the dimension of tolerance that makes all these processes meaningful. The maturity in his philosophy has enabled him to identify the important role of tolerance in life.

An individual sans tolerance becomes a person lacking in cultural refinement. If as Ariyaratne interprets culture "is a way of screening what one will accept and reject from the outside" lack of tolerance would interfere with the refined exercise of this judgement. An individual lacking in tolerance cannot talk or cause tolerance in a community or nation. The majority of our social problems (e.g. ethnic, religious, colour, tension) arise primarily in an individual in whom there is no dimension of tolerance. Later it arises in groups of individuals sans such tolerance in their pattern of behaviour. These problems assume gigantic proportions within the passage of time and devour the very people who released these destructive processes at the individual level and nurtured them to become national or international problems. The extent to which the absence of tolerance cause disorder and chaos in individuals and in their community or social life is evident in the social and political turmoils we observe everywhere in the world today.

Ariyaratne perceives political power as emanating from the grassroots, i.e. the people themselves. The flowering of such political power is best realised when a sufficient number of sustainable communities are organised throughout the world, controlling and managing their own physical, social and structural environment. Then a global process of creating a new society will start to evolve; both horizontally and from the bottom upwards.

Modern democracy considered by some as the best form of government is seen by Ariyaratne as exercising enormous power over the very people on whose behalf 'they got into such positions.' Such democratic leaders and their system of politics has not succeeded in eradicating "poverty, disorder, ignorance, social violence, communal dissension, terrorism, wars and other forms of social ills we are faced with today."

The political solution available is to awaken the individual and the community to form a participatory democracy. What Ariyaratne means here is a democracy comprising a sizeable group of small communities managing their affairs by themselves with tolerance as their key principle. They depend on their resources, both human and material, sharing in every way with each other. i.e. with other communities far and near. His political vision though not directly articulated, is available in the flashes of insight found in those later writings.

His solutions to problems are very practical. It is this practical approach that distinguishes his way of looking at things from that of many others. One example of his practical approach is seen in the problem of hunger, and poverty. Can we eradicate poverty? Can we bring affluence to these people? Or should we strive to bring affluence to them even if it is possible? Instead, can we help them to create a state of no poverty society by their own effort? Is it not a more meaningful exercise where targets can be realised by their own efforts?

Although the Sarvodaya philosophy at the early period was practical; in other words based on experience, Ariyaratne at that time did not have the empirical insight into social problems that he possesses now. It is this empirical insight that enabled him to reject the idea that poverty is unavoidable. Those nurtured only in the western tradition often equate poverty with karma in the Buddhist philosophy: the result of the belief that one is born poor because of one's past actions, and that one can do nothing about it is prevalent today.

This was propagated even by social thinkers. Ariyaratne correctly discerns karma as one of basic causes that go to determine the course of life. In his essays, he has made reference to such five basic niyamas (causes) a number of times. The effect of past action (karma) could be offset by present action. Having realised this, Ariyaratne visualises the power of creating a new no affluence society for the poor themselves. The process is to be realised by "self-development, self-reliance, community participation and self-satisfaction of the basic needs on a planned basis."

In the contribution made by Sarvodaya in attempting to create a new social order, the five-fold strategy formulated, transforms Sarvodaya ideals into a dynamic dimension. Although in the initial stages, Sarvodaya was regarded as revolutionary, this revolutionary spirit was not practically manifested in such a strategy. There was no immediate challenge demanding such a strategy because Sarvodaya did not experience confrontation at a macro political level. Recently it had to face such confrontation, and the inevitable result is the outcome of this revolutionary strategy of facing a macro political confrontation against the philosophy practised by the Sarvodaya.



The strategy was devised with five main limbs: (1) The exercise of unlimited patience. (2) The aggressive awareness programme carried out to educate the people as to the dangers of environmental harm socially disastrous and economically harmful to the development projects. (3) Legally facing the authority on the freedom to associate and work for the benefit of the people. (4) Mobilization of the people by means of mass action programmes. (5) Strengthening democracy against any individual on social or political repression.

The five-limb strategy inevitably silenced all those who criticised the Sarvodaya philosophy and programme as: (1) dormant and socially inactive, (2) out of character with revolutionary activity because of the lack of active mobilisation of people, (3) protecting the status-quo and never working against it. Even Sarvodaya's 'gentle persuasion' was seen as a means of non-active participation not desiring to change social, political or economic conditions that was only used as a device to please and protect those in power.

To a discerning critic, the Ariyaratne philosophy now appears as a direct continuation of the Sarvodaya's initial principles, and at no level a contradiction of such basic tenets of Sarvodaya's enunciation almost three and a half decades ago. At that time Ariyaratne desired to change the man and the community. It was indeed revolutionary - but being a practical man, Ariyaratne wanted to cause the change in a practical way. On the local level, he or the movement did not experience a macro political challenge then. Then there was no necessity to articulate the philosophy, refining it and making it ready for use in immediate action.

Moreover, being very eclectic, Ariyaratne allowed his philosophy and action-programme to mature with experience. He had confrontation on a micro level. In the village, in the town and in the community he met such confrontation with the very same principle. The five-limb programme is nothing but the timely flowering of his philosophy and strategy of the past.

This strategy - at least various limbs constituting this strategy was used in the past. One example, I remember, was a problem in a certain village. This happened over two decades ago. The

Sarvodaya in the village wanted to construct a road. An individual of political, economic and social importance in the village did not want it to be done. He came several times and scolded and threatened the Sarvodaya organisers. They exercised patience. Thereafter the Sarvodaya workers began to educate the people on the need of the road for everyday use of the people. This was indeed an awareness programme with a certain amount of aggressiveness. They thereafter appealed to the courts, but delayed it until mass action was mobilised. It was at this time that the strong man and his supporters gave up their opposition, allowing the road to be constructed. He himself donated land and involved himself in the labour, finally strengthening the democratic process of the participation of everyone.

I remember how during the time of a previous government a powerful minister created problems for the Sarvodaya. Certain aspects of the same strategy were put into action then. The difference today is the utilisation of the entire five-limbs of the strategy in realising the objectives of the Sarvodaya philosophy. Gentle persuasion is not replaced by aggressive education and vigorous mass action. Side-by-side with such persuasion, aggressive persuasion takes place. Change of times needs emphasis in the earlier strategies, and that is what Ariyaratne has rightly done.

The five-limb strategy became articulated at the time when the central government chose to deal with Sarvodaya, utilising brutal confrontation. Amidst the practical need to galvanise the earlier utilised strategies, Ariyaratne formulated them in a coherent order to form five-limbs of one comprehensive strategy. This was nothing but the maturation of Ariyaratne's eclectic philosophy. Only the future can tell whether Ariyaratne and his followers would successfully transform this strategy to a national agenda and even a global plan of action. The crying need in the world today is not confrontation, but a positive strategy to meet confrontation with gentle persuasion backed by people participating at all possible levels.

Finally let me add one word of caution on translating this strategy to meet political confrontation. There is undoubtedly a truth in the saying that "under existing constitutional and political

realities in Sri Lanka, these objectives cannot be realised without confronting party politicians and their institutions." But is it wise and meaningful to devise a political organisation out of Sarvodaya to meet such a challenge? It is stated that Sarvodaya had contemplated to form a political organisation and get it registered under the Commissioner of Elections. I hope and pray that this would not happen. The five-limb strategy and gentle persuasion to aggressive persuasion should continue. The people's education leading to vibrant mass action would be sufficient to achieve the desired objectives without transforming Sarvodaya into another stereo-type political machine.

Sarvodaya in attempting to deal with problems caused in macro politics should not end up in the end becoming a part of such macro politics. Instead, Sarvodaya should retain its identity, its noble philosophy and grassroot strategy and fight evil from wherever it comes confronting such forces with its own weapons.

**N.R.**

10.5.1996





## A PEOPLE'S AGENDA FOR GLOBAL AWAKENING

President, Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, Rev. Motoyuki Naganuma, Chairman of the Niwano Peace Foundation and Members of the Board, Mr. Kunio Hatoyama, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture, His Eminence Yasuri Hirose, President of Japan Religious League, Professor Osamu Muro, Distinguished Guests, Sisters and Brothers.

I am grateful to the Niwano Peace Foundation for selecting me to receive the ninth Niwano Peace Prize. With renewed faith in non-violence and justice, I accept this Prize. It is my duty to share this honour with my colleagues in the *Sarvodaya Shramadana* Movement of Sri Lanka, who have chosen to dedicate their time, thought, and effort to building a new society, which we call a Sarvodaya Society, where the well-being and awakening of all are assured.

I am happy and thankful that the Niwano Peace Foundation has enabled my wife, Neetha Dhammachari, to participate with me in this historic and solemn ceremony. Almost from the inception of the Movement she has been constantly by my side, like a shadow, sharing with me the risks and dangers as well as the moments of recognition and joy that accompanied our struggle for social transformation.

The eminent personages who have preceded me in receiving this prize have set high standards of sacrifice and dedication in the cause of peace. Living up to their example places a great responsibility on me. It is an even more difficult task to achieve the noble ideals that our most revered Rev. Nikkyo Niwano held before us when he founded and inspired *Risso Kosei-kai*, the Niwano Peace Foundation, and the World Conference on Religion and Peace. He expects us to serve humanity by perfecting in ourselves the *bodhisatva* qualities that are inherent in all of us.

Hence this is an appropriate occasion for me to re-appraise the humble services I may have rendered to fellow living beings and re-dedicate myself to reach higher levels of selfless service to mankind.

I am fortunate to have been born in a country where the teachings of Lord Gautama Buddha are readily accessible. According to the ancient Sri Lankan legendary chronicle, the **Mahavamsa** or "Great Lineage", Lord Buddha visited Sri Lanka on three occasions. To this day, thousands of pilgrims flock to the places hallowed by His presence on particular dates when the moon is full and perform all forms of *Dana*, or alms giving, *Sila*, or keeping to the precepts, and *Bhavana*, or meditation.

Emperor Asoka's son, Arahant Maha Mahinda, formally established the *Buddha Sasana* in Sri Lanka in the third century B.C. by founding the *Sangha*, that is the Order. During the first Century B.C., the Buddha's teachings were set down in writing by monks who until then had passed them down orally. Thus the Noble Triple Gem, which consists of the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*, became the refuge of Buddhists in our country.

In the *Maha Mangala Sutra*, Lord Buddha expounded 38 blessings, or auspicious characteristics, that lead human beings and societies to peace and happiness. These include, for example, living in a harmonious environment, good karma, self-control, association with the learned and the wise, looking after one's family, liberality, respectable work, abstaining from intoxicants, listening to the *Dhamma* and joining in *Dhamma* discussions at appropriate times, and mindfulness.

When I look back, I realize how fortunate I was to have been born into a family of parents, aunts, uncles and other elders who knew the *sutras* by heart and tried their best to live by them in their daily lives. It was a further blessing that our home was next to a temple where learned and disciplined monks lived. Before we entered primary school we were taught in the temple school by monks and learned laymen.. My education was thus founded on Buddhist spiritual goals and moral values. This spiritual-moral foundation could not be shaken by the later conditioning of my mind in college, where I was exposed to the worlds of science and technology, economics and politics, capitalism and communism, and so on. All of these lacked the depth of vision needed for spiritual contentment. Naturally I had to choose a path in life, for life, and through life, that would give me the joy of living every moment. This is how, thirty four years ago, I decided to surrender

myself completely to the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*, and to strive to help build a Sarvodaya Social Order in my country and the World.

## A Dual Awakening Process

The Word 'Sarvodaya' was coined by *Mahatma Gandhi* to describe a new social order which he envisioned as being very different from the capitalist and communist systems prevalent at that time. Literally it means "The Welfare of all". With my Buddhist outlook, when I came across the word Sarvodaya, I interpreted it as "the Awakening of All". *Buddha* literally means the "Awakened One". Those of us who aspire to Enlightenment or are *Bodhisatvas* are those who tread the Buddha Way, or the path of awakening. We should therefore strive to awaken ourselves to the full as we strive for the awakening of all.

I cannot awaken myself unless I help awaken others. Others cannot awaken unless I do. So it is an interconnected and interdependent dual process of the awakening of self and of society that we have chosen in Sarvodaya.

In the Pali language, Lord Buddha's admonition to us was:

*Dukkappaththaca Niddukkha*  
*Bhayappaththaca Nibbaya*  
*Sokappaththaca Nissoka*  
*Hontu Sabbepi Panino"*

This means:

"May those  
Who suffer physically - overcome physical suffering,  
Who are in fear - overcome fear,  
Who suffer mentally - overcome mental suffering,  
May all living beings be free from suffering"

This is *Sarvodaya* in the most profound sense. Transcending all man-made barriers of caste, race religion, nationality and other ways of separating human beings, Sarvodaya serves all. Sarvodaya works to remove the causes of human physical

suffering, anxiety, and fear. Working for interreligious and interracial harmony, eradicating poverty and empowering the poor, promoting peace by religious education and spiritual development programmes, engaging in every kind of peace making processes, taking non-violent action against human rights violations and other forms of injustice, these are all part of the Sarvodaya portfolio of activities.

## **Interdependence**

Society is composed of individuals, families, village communities, urban groups, national populations and humanity as a whole. We are all living on one planet and are commonly subjected to the limitations imposed by non-renewable resources, ecological balances, climatic and temperature changes, environmental factors, psychological and social dependencies, physical survival, and other forms of animal and plant life. So the survival, existence, and awakening of every one of us is dependent on all other living and nonliving entities of our planet.

For the sake of building practical programmes we formulated the Sarvodaya Goal of the Awakening of All in terms of six objectives, which are:

Purna Paurushodaya or "Personality Awakening"

Kutumbodaya or "Family Awakening"

Gramodaya or "Village Community Awakening"

Nagarodaya or "Urban Community Awakening"

Deshodaya or "National Community Awakening"

Vishvodaya or "World Community Awakening"

Each of these objectives relates to and enhances the others. All these objectives were to be achieved in six integrated sectors. These were the Spiritual, Moral, Cultural, Social, Economic and Political dimensions related to each objective. We kept before ourselves the fascinating and adventurous task of reaching the very highest goal we could conceive of and adopted a concrete programme of action in the mid-nineteen fifties.

## Community Awakening

In the psychological and social environment in which we started our work, there was both the positive and a negative response to our work. The positive response came mostly from the poor and powerless. They lived in rural areas and urban slums. The negative response came from the rich and powerful, with the exception of a few who were spiritually inclined. In spite of 450 years of colonial influence, the rural poor generally preserved their spiritual, moral and cultural values. The fact that they were excluded from the colonial economy and isolated from the colonial influence helped to preserve their values. In contrast, the elite classes had almost totally abandoned their traditional and sustainable life styles. They sought to integrate themselves into colonial society, and to the extent they were successful they gave up their past. So it was not surprising that they were not inclined to support Sarvodaya activities.

The economic and political systems of the ruling elites were also fashioned under colonial tutelage. So the concept of the awakening of all, based on Buddhist values, was not easy to implement.

Initially, the only resources we had besides these values were the time, thought, and efforts we would pool on a self-help basis. This we called *Shramadana*, or "the gift of labour". Our first target was village communities that were subjected to caste or social and economic discrimination. Over 200 communities in which we worked during the first stage of our movement were such villages. Subsequently, when we were invited into other villages, we went, and to date we are working in several thousands of villages in Sri Lanka. Tens of thousands of young and old have joined hands in this self-development effort.

The Sarvodaya objective is to create a society that is neither rich nor poor, where every individual, family, and community is awakened to a more contented, peaceful, and just life. These small units should be the fundamental human groups that should build a new, just, and non-violent world society. We believe that national and international political and economic structures should be solidly restructured on the basis of human-centered social and



community organizations in order to create a better world. It is in such a new global society that the awakening or well-being of all will be ensured. This kind of society is different from capitalist and communist models. Sarvodaya rejects the idea of a Welfare State but believes in a Welfare Society. It rejects centralization of political and economic power and strives to build minimally controlled, mostly self-regulated, communities. The decisive factor in building such a society is the mutuality and the community that the people build to manage themselves, their resources, and the environment. With a variety of well-integrated community development programmes Sarvodaya is trying to achieve this objective. Both in Sri Lanka and several other countries, Sarvodaya has actively promoted such people centred programmes for world renewal.

### **Gentle Persuasion**

It was 34 years ago in Sri Lanka that we started sacrificing our time, thought, efforts and resources to achieve this ideal. We concentrated on awakening individuals, families, and communities to their highest potential. This was no easy task in a country plagued with a myriad of conflicting ideologies, technologies, and politico-bureaucratic structures. The system of power-oriented party politics had progressively reached every nook and cranny of the country in four decades, and Sarvodaya had to contend with the conflicting anti-development process they released. Our people were divided by every conceivable man-made difference.

Sarvodaya was able to stem this tide by refusing to align itself with any power group and evolving itself into a national movement, winning the hearts of several million rural people in every district and sub-district of Sri Lanka. The bloody insurrections in the South and the civil war in the North did not divert our attention. Nor did we take opportunistic stances for less worthwhile goals.

We believed in the innate goodness of all human being. We tried to build a spiritual and psychological infrastructure transcending all barriers while the nation was getting atomized by political and racial rivalries. We resisted the temptation to side with any political party or anyone in power. On the contrary, we



always upheld the fundamental rights of every citizen of our country to live in peace with justice.

We have never compromised the principle that nonviolence and justice under the law are the only means by which conflicts can be satisfactorily and amicably resolved. As a people's organization, we have used social welfare, self-development and advocacy as the three means to achieve our objectives. Sarvodaya has gained global recognition for its record of welfare services and people-centred development activities. At the same time, we have been criticized by certain political activists for insufficient advocacy and confrontational action in the face of blatant human-rights violations and political and economic injustices.

We did not join the confrontational groups. Instead we followed a path of gentle, silent persuasion as well as one of building alternative socio-political and economic structures that are outside the establishment but within the law. These alternative structures prepared people to control their own institutions. Instead of having so-called democracy being imposed on them from above, people became participant-beneficiaries of a system of democracy that they themselves were evolving from below.

We succeeded in organizing in over 8600 villages of Sri Lanka the elements of the Sarvodaya society where an excellent social infrastructure of pre-school children, school-going children, youth, mothers, farmers, craftsmen, and other elders participated in satisfying their own basic human needs. We embarked very successfully on a Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services program. This is an alternative path to awaken and empower the poorest of the poor economically as well as spiritually.

We grappled with this bottom up path of social change based on the highest conceivable indigenous values. We received maximum cooperation from all religious, political, administrative, and even security sectors of our society. This task was a thousand times more difficult than getting into political office. The joy one gets in the process of this innovative task may even be a million times greater than the kind that comes from wielding power.

The very success of our work with individuals, families, and rural and urban communities has aroused fear and perhaps envy among those who wield economic and political power at the highest level. This is quite understandable and we are not disturbed by it. We all know that the Western model of development is unbalanced. It has no spiritual or moral objective. It is purely materialistic in intent as well as in content. Exploitation of scarce resources to the maximum, applying profit-maximizing technologies to the full, fuelling human greed through a variety of commercial techniques, and catering to the utmost gratification of the five senses are this model's salient features. It has brought affluence to a small fraction of the world population in industrialized countries while the vast majority of people in the world are sunk in absolute poverty, powerlessness and deprivation. Even the rich are experiencing spiritual poverty. The affluent young in particular are moving rapidly toward a materialistic dead-end in life. They enjoy lifestyles in which commitments have become quite unnecessary, but then they find that, without a commitment to serve others, their lives become empty of purpose.

It is a sad fact that the wielders of political and economic power do not seem to appreciate the need for a different model of development that is more appropriate to the challenges humanity faces today. Sarvodaya is such a proven model. It has proved in practice that self-reliance, community participation, and community self-development can be utilized to satisfy the most pressing needs of rural communities without destroying their spiritual, moral, and cultural values. Sustainable development can become a reality only if we promote this development model, building from the bottom-up, reversing the kind of development systems that try to build from the top-down that were tried after the Second World War.

### **A New Model Needed**

Large development projects whose ultimate result was making the rich richer and the poor poorer have received huge financial resources by way of grants and loans from bilateral and multilateral aid programmes. This inflow of capital to the

suprastructures of our societies have resulted in an unprecedented concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a few while community efforts have become weaker owing to the lack of capital and community self-management power.

Organizations like Sarvodaya are assisted by voluntary bodies such as the Risso Kosei-kai. This kind of voluntary support is a drop in the ocean compared to the massive inflow of capital to the established system based on greed for wealth and power. Concerned individuals, groups, voluntary organizations and governments in affluent societies help the poorest of the poor by directly associating themselves with those whose aim is organizing the poor. But the fact is that with our own meagre resources, however motivated we are, we cannot stem the tide of organized greed, it will, and ignorance imposed on our helpless people by an aggressive market economy, centralized political authority, a soulless bureaucracy, and controlled mass media.

How much longer can our people tolerate an increasingly hazardous combination of psychological and physical environmental pollution, loss of fundamental human rights, the breakdown of age-old spiritual-moral value systems and social harmony, the daily loss of human lives and valuable social assets through civil war, and the frightening militarization of our country? What is true of Sri Lanka is equally true for many other neighbouring countries.

It would be no exaggeration to say that the countries of South Asia have reached a stage from which they can progress no further. To put it bluntly, the conventional thinkers who decide the fates of our people are deeply mired in an old rut. All over the region, pockets of civil war have grown and continue to grow, which the central authorities cannot put down. Thousands of people are rendered refugees, injured, or deprived of their lives each month in terrible violence that saps the soul of our region.

For instance, in the north-east of Sri Lanka and in India's Kashmir, Punjab, Assam, and Nagaland the fires of ethnic separatism appear to be unquenchable. On the other hand, despite claims of high economic growth and macro economic progress, the problem of poverty that afflicts more than half the world's

population appears to be insoluble. The bottom 40 percent of the Sri Lankan population who obtained a little less than 20 percent of the national income in 1973 received only about 10 percent by 1987. In a nutshell, the politico-economic system that our region inherited from the colonial rulers has failed. It has come to a dead end, just like the communist system in the former Soviet Union and its satellites.

More than 2500 years ago the teachings of Lord Buddha found a home in Sri Lanka. The *Mahavamsa* says that before Lord Buddha attained Parinibbana he summoned the gods and asked them to protect the island of Lanka, where his teachings would be safeguarded. It is the memory of those ancient words that has instilled in the majority of Sri Lankans a deep identification of their land with Buddhism. Even while Buddhism decayed in India, the teachings of Lord Buddha flourished in Sri Lanka.

So it is not strange that once again, Sri Lanka should take with gratitude from India the teachings and practice of Mahatma Gandhi and give new life to it through Sarvodaya. Those of us who belong to Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka see a historic duty and opportunity before us. We believe that Sri Lanka is small enough for us to launch a big experiment. We believe that with love, liberality, and sacrifice we can reawaken our people to unity and peace. We hope that what we achieve in Sri Lanka we will be able to offer back to India, to South Asia, and to a World that seeks a new way.

## **The Agenda**

Those of us who stand for Non-violence, Justice, and Peace, should stand in solidarity and work on a People's Agenda for "Global Awakening". Such an agenda, I believe, should have the following five items:

The first item should be that of promoting personality awakening programmes in all communities of the world according to their own historical, cultural, and religious realities.

What do we mean by personality and personality awakening? The concepts we have and the meanings we give may differ from



culture to culture, and religion to religion. Yet, understanding what is meant by personality and its final fulfilment has a spiritual goal, such as *nirvana* or the realization of God. The more such self-recognition occurs in individuals, the weaker will be the evil forces of greed, ill-will, and ignorance that control our societies. What is important is not religious rivalries and ideological differences but the spiritual unity of religion, which ennobles human personalities.

According to Lord Buddha's teachings, the ever-changing Nama-Rupa or Body-Mind complex is subject to suffering and is sustained by our craving and our ignorance of reality.

By cultivating liberality, morality, and mindfulness, we can cultivate a right understanding of our Five Aggregates of Clinging to Desires that are subject to Dependent Co-arising. This Lord Buddha called *Pancha Upadanakkhanda* subject to *Patticca Samuppada Dhamma*. Unless *Bhavana*, or meditation is practised, a Buddhist cannot grasp this teaching of personality awakening. But if the society we live in is one that encourages people to become involved in consumerist binges and in rat races to outdo one another, people will believe that they have no time for meditation but only time for external exertion.

The right kind of religious education with regular practice of mindfulness, therefore, should become an important component of our educational system. Nutrition, physical, mental, and social health care are prerequisites for personality-awakening programmes. A massive chain of pre-school children's care centres, school children's activities, mothers' groups, youth activities, preventive, curative, and after-care programmes for drug addicts and alcoholics, nutrition and health-care activities, water and sanitation projects, literacy and religious instruction programmes, peace brigades, peace marches, and so on cater to such needs. Sarvodaya work programmes foster all these activities with the cooperation of the people who are themselves the beneficiaries.

Those of us who dedicate ourselves to service others should not ignore our own personality - awakening when we are engrossed in serving. Right through my Sarvodaya life I have

been subjected to ridicule, abuse, insult, and oppression. Ofcourse, I have received love and recognition too in plenty. In the last three years I have been the victim of a government controlled hostile media campaign. Dozens of death threats to myself and my family were received from unknown sources. Sarvodaya properties were unjustly seized and endless harassments of our programs were manipulated by certain powerful authorities. All these obstacles strengthened our personalities and brought us closer to peace of mind, which is essential to spiritual awakening. After all, we are on a *sansaric* journey, a cycle of birth and death, and we want to attain supreme happiness in *Nirvana*. All these are experiences that help us to seek perfection leading to supreme enlightenment. Lord Buddha called the development of these perfection *paramitas*.

The second item of our agenda should be a practical network of all such persons, groups, and organizations within countries and between countries to exchange experiences and give mutual support.

Close relationships can be built up among ourselves based on both physical proximity and spiritual affinity. When enough people who share spiritual values and experience come together, they generate a critical mass of spiritual consciousness that becomes a tangible reality and empowers much larger numbers of people. The relationship between Sarvodaya and Risso Kosei-kai is such a form of empowering and networking. We exchange visits of our members, share resources, learn from each other, and try to strengthen both ourselves and other similar efforts in the world. While Risso Kosei-kai was the first Japanese organization to establish fraternal relations with Sarvodaya, I am happy to state that several other individuals, groups, community organizations, and national non-governmental organizations are now in the process of building development co-operation links with us. The people of Japan, I believe, have to play a critical role in building the new world community we aspire to.

Sarvodaya has succeeded in taking the Sarvodaya message to many industrialized and non-industrialized countries of the world. Large numbers of young people from around the world have come and worked in Sarvodaya. Sarvodaya volunteers have served in

other countries of the world. I spent a considerable part of my time in the last twenty five years carrying the message of non-violence, peace, and justice around the world to many countries and international fora. We should continue this.

The third item on our agenda should be to promote, in our own homes and societies, life styles based on universally accepted values, and sustainable, non-violent systems of distribution and consumption with no regard for national boundaries.

In Sarvodaya homes and communities, we follow a system that we call the Ten Basic Human Needs Satisfaction Programme. Our objective is to build a life style free of poverty, with a clean environment, an adequate supply of clean water, a balanced diet, simple clothing, simple housing, primary health care; basic energy needs and communication requirements; and educational facilities and opportunities for cultural and spiritual development.

A simple life style, as advocated by Sarvodaya, is particularly relevant when the limits to the planet's capacity to sustain extravagant, materially affluent life styles has become clear. On the other hand, the value of such a life style in promoting human happiness, even among the global minority fortunate enough to enjoy it, is open to question.

To those of us who believe that a contented society is one that strives for spiritual fulfilment, an affluent life style in which desires are artificially created and easily satisfied will be a distraction. This is the reason Lord Buddha advised us to avoid both self-mortification and self-indulgence. *Majjima Patipada*, the Middle Path, is the most noble.

In turn, those who see the extravagant life style of a few and live in that atmosphere will find it difficult to resist the natural temptations to imitate it. Because of the inter-connection of the life styles of everyone, the world needs to reorient itself to life styles that are neither poor nor affluent, so that the life styles of some will not undermine those of the majority.

The fourth item is building strong spiritual, psychological, and social infrastructures among members of rural and urban

communities consisting of no more than 100 families. The size of the community should be such that every member, young or old, should be able to know and communicate with all other members.

The current violence within our countries and between our countries is rooted in two broad sectors. One is our own ignorant minds, which generate evil thoughts of greed and ill-will all the time. The second is our social, economic, and political structures in which these evil thoughts of greed and ill-will can be organized for collective manifestations. The larger the political and economic structures we establish, the greater will be the concentration of power in the hands of a few.

Truth, non-violence, selflessness, beneficence, morality, spirituality, forgiveness and so on are virtues that can manifest themselves best in our personal lives and to some extent in our families and small communities. Certainly they cannot take root and grow in governments or corporations, which by nature are spiritually dead, mindless, and heartless. Presidents and prime ministers, kings and queens, ministers and diplomats, bureaucrats and generals, corporation heads and executives- they may all be pure-hearted and virtuous men and women. But the very nature of the gigantic governmental, military, industrial and financial establishments does not allow these people to use their spiritual values in controlling and directing these soulless structures.

All traces of humanity in both capitalist and communist systems vanished decades ago. The structures of communism are collapsing as we can witness today in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. But the triumph of capitalism will not be permanent either. Those who are holding together big institutions by sheer brute force or tight administrative, financial, and communications controls have also, in essence, collapsed morally. When environmental, ecological, and health hazards brought about by abuse of technology and the use of modern weaponry reach critical proportions, these too will collapse in plain sight before our very eyes. Finding alternative systems and keeping them in place and in working order is the responsibility of all concerned world citizens such as you who are gathered here.



## Community Control

The fifth and the last item of the People's Agenda for Global Awakening that I propose is to establish self-governing communities globally, where spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic, and political activities are under the direct control of people.

Once a sufficient number of sustainable human communities are organized around the world, controlling and managing their own physical, social, and structural environments, then a global process of creating a new society will start to evolve both horizontally and from the bottom up.

To the extent that the present managers of large societies realize the importance of this kind of horizontal global awakening, the process will be expedited. Also, a progressive reduction in the manufacture and use of even conventional weapons of destruction will be achieved. Consumption of non-renewable and environmentally dangerous energy resources will also be reduced.

The need for coercive instruments of government will no longer exist. Thousands of self-governing communities will merge on this Planet. To a very large extent they will be self-sustaining. They will be living harmoniously with nature. Every cultural and sub-cultural entity will be preserved and add lustre to society. People who have mastered themselves and are uplifted in spirit will be able to play a leading role instead of being driven to the peripheries, as they are in highly centralized systems.

As a global community we have an extremely advanced body of scientific knowledge and technological know-how. Unwisely we have used it to satisfy our animal instincts and sensual desires. When these powerful instruments fell into the hands of selfish, greedy, cruel people who were able to capture power under centralized systems, they devastated nature, marginalized millions of people who had no access to that modern knowledge and technology, and waged two world wars and hundred of other smaller ones. On the other hand, as a global community, we still possess an immense wealth of spiritual wisdom. We use these mostly in our own limited ways confined to ourselves and our

families, with a view to attaining a better life with the next birth or heaven. Now the time has come when science and technology on the one hand and spiritual wisdom on the other have to be synthesized on a global scale to build a nobler, more contented, just and peaceful global community.

On this memorable occasion I pledge before this august assembly that I shall devote the rest of my life with my colleagues in my country and around the world to continue with greater dedication our Sarvodaya Services to build such a society. At the same time, I shall vigorously pursue my own role of self-realization by progressively trying to reduce my own craving, ill will, and ignorance, so that I will be a worthy member of the Kingdom of Heaven on this Planet Earth.

May I conclude with Buddha's words from the Dhammapada.

*"Arogya parama labhaa  
Santuththi paramam dhanam  
Vissasa parama nati  
Nibbanam paramam sukham"*

*Good Health is the greatest gain,  
Contentment is the greatest wealth,  
Trust is the greatest kinsman,  
Nibbana - Freedom - is the ultimate  
happiness."*

May you enjoy the Blessings of the Noble Triple Gem and the Protection of the Devas !

Thank you.

---

*(Commemorative Lecture delivered by Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne at the Ninth Award Ceremony of the Niwano Peace Prize on 12 May 1992 in Tokyo.)*

## REALISTIC APPROACHES TO THE FUTURE - AVAILABLE FOR THE UNDERPRIVILEGED

### A Global Perspective

As a fellow social worker from Sri Lanka I take this opportunity to first thank and congratulate Dr Dudley Dissanayake for the successful effort he has put in to host this Social Workers' World Conference in our country. His dedication, dynamism and the cordial and pleasant way he got together a team of national organisers to undertake this responsible and difficult task deserve our high admiration. I join with the organisers in welcoming our distinguished guests from abroad and wish them a pleasant and fruitful stay in our beautiful country among our friendly people.

I am also thankful for being given the privilege of delivering a keynote address on this occasion. The presence of the other keynote speaker at the opening session, Prof. Johan Galtung, eminent scholar and philosopher, will be a great inspiration to us. In my opinion, his contribution to the global peace process and to development thinking has been unmatched by any other contemporary thinker. After Dr E.F. Schumacher passed away he has been a guiding light to my work with underprivileged people in the rural backwoods of Sri Lanka.

Many of us present here belong to the social work field and live and serve among the underprivileged people dedicated to the noble cause of uplifting humanity from the bottom upwards. I empathise very much with you for I know the kinds of sacrifices you would have made over the years and the challenges you would have had to overcome. Service to others is ultimately a giving up of one's self, the greatest and final call of the spiritual and divine forces that call to us throughout our lives, and to which the more sensitive of us give ear.

An opportunity to get together to exchange our experiences and share our views about future prospects and to design strategies to improve the conditions of the underprivileged globally does not come every day. Therefore, it is my hope that from the realities of our local situations we will project our thoughts and prospective

plans for the future so that we can work as a global community of social workers to bring about sustainable lifestyles, protected life-support systems, healthy environments, just economies and societal peace.

### **Uncounted Loss**

In her book, "Paradigms in Progress: Life Beyond Economics" (1991), the well known policy analyst Hazel Hendersen compares the GNP-monetised part of the total productive system of an industrial society with its non-monetised productive part. All the cash transactions of the official market economy, private sector production and defence, state and local governments and the underground economy belong to the first sector. Voluntarism, sharing, mutual aid, unpaid household work, parenting and caring for the old and sick, home-based production for use, subsistence agriculture and all that is pertaining to nature belong to the other sector.

Certainly, we who are pre-occupied with social work belong to this part of the total production system which is hardly given a place in national accounting or the global GNP type measurements of progress. In spite of newly designed indicators and measurements by the UNDP, World Bank and others there is no significant drive, either nationally or internationally, to check the marginalisation of traditional societies and cultures, restructuring of work and production, creation of mass scale poverty, wasteful consumption and increasing pollution and resource depletion. There has been no reversal of these trends in support of the losers in this global economic power play.

It is my belief that we should courageously go beyond the narrow confines of conventional concepts and practices of social work and get to the roots of the global sickness with a commitment to find lasting remedies. By this I do not mean that we should abandon or attach less importance to the humanitarian work we are already engaged doing in various fields of social welfare. On the contrary, we should do all that work within a broader agenda of working towards a fundamental transformation of people's consciousness in relation to the reality within human personalities, between human beings and the natural world and

those human-made structures and processes that have driven the world to an unbearable and unsustainable situation for more than two-thirds of humanity inhabiting this planet.

We work among the poor, among victims of civil disturbances and war, internal and external refugees, orphaned children and widows, exploited women and children, ex-convicts and drug addicts, the physically, mentally and socially disabled, the terminally sick and the elderly. We try to resolve conflicts, alleviate poverty, empower the poor and women, save the environment and many other things besides. Now the time is opportune for us to stop and think how much of these miseries and sufferings we are trying to combat are rooted in concepts, practices and structures we have taken for granted. What is the contribution that social workers can make to bring about positive transformations in our consciousness and restructure our societies for sustainability - the newest term and goal that has become popular in our development talk-shop.

### **The Choice**

When speaking about the future, the most important subjects that were discussed in the recent past were issues pertaining to population increases and to poverty. Next came the interest in issues concerning human rights violations and environmental sustainability. Each of these problems was thoroughly discussed and approaches were meticulously developed to implement them. Of course, all of these were linked to the general theme of development, justice and peace. What was envisaged were political and economic adjustments that would satisfactorily meet all these problems.

Looking at the future from the perspective of the underprivileged of the world should we confine ourselves to these issues that are continuously undergoing conceptual changes accompanied by a shift in priorities? Or should we look at the global situation from a holistic viewpoint based on eternal laws that are applicable at all times in human affairs and the environment that sustains all life?



For example, Lord Buddha in his teachings explained the importance of human beings conducting their lives on the basis of certain cosmic laws. He referred to the Law of Genetic Order (Bija Niyama), the Law of Seasons (Utu Niyama), the Law of Moral Causation (Kamma Niyama), the Law of Natural Phenomena (Dhamma Niyama) and the Law of Mental Phenomena (Citta Niyama). When we delve deep into these laws we see the unity and interdependence of all beings, things and phenomena which must be understood and the consequences of their violation which affect every dimension of our lives.

I belong to a people's movement known as the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement—which literally means the awakening of all through sharing. This movement has been active for 36 years. The global sustainability we believe in is solidly based on the application of the principles of sustainability firstly to the individual, the family and their community. It is on this foundation that we believe a sustainable, national and global community can be built.

It is for this reason that, in the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, we defined development as an awakening process that takes place in the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political dimensions of human beings, the family, rural and urban communities, the national community and the world community. It is from this standpoint that a variety of awakening processes under the generally used terms like health, nutrition, education, employment and income generation have to be understood.

For over four decades the leaders of Sri Lanka and other South Asian countries have tried to solve the problems of ethnic conflict and poverty from the topmost rungs of their centralised national structures without a spiritual or cosmic vision in which the well being of everyone and everything in society was the focus. But it is clear that they have failed. What may not be so clear is whether these problems can be resolved at all within the present economic and political framework.

The fact is that today the destinies of millions upon millions of ordinary people in the South Asian region are in the hands of small coteries of elites who, although they periodically contest so-

called elections, represent little more than themselves. The masses of people at the base of society have practically speaking no right of self-determination. They are at the mercy of decisions taken by a handful, in governments, multilateral financial agencies and multinational companies, in realms beyond their comprehension.

More than anything else, therefore, the project for the future is to see that people living in small communities, who still constitute the vast majority of the population in the developing countries, get back the control over their own lives.

Normal human beings find it easier to react rather than act. When an external stimuli impinges on one of our five senses or on the mind, what comes out is a thought as a reaction. This reaction can be either in the form of a desire to possess or to reject. If it is to possess, that is a reaction based on desire or clinging. On the other hand, if it is to reject, that is in the nature of ill-will or conflict. Clinging to material things and concepts such as race, religion and language while rejecting others gave the impetus to various political parties, vested interests and commercial groupings to give these psychological processes an organised form.

What has happened in Sri Lanka, for instance, during the last two decades is that relationships ranging from the primary social unit, the family, to the broad national community have degenerated to an unbelievably chaotic level. Mothers are leaving their families for several years at a time in order to go abroad as domestic servants and earn money. Sons are leaving their families to join the armed forces of the government or the rebel side and return either in polythene bags or for brief periods of relaxation from the psychological trauma they undergo on the battlefield. Families have lost their dynamic stability as styles of life, cash requirements and addiction to drugs and alcohol are increasingly at variance with harmonious behavioural patterns. These are the severe costs that never enter into national income accounts or human development indices of the international agencies.

### **Minimal Controls**

Today the Sarvodaya Movement is the world's largest people's movement conducted by a non-governmental organization. The

word "Sarvodaya" was coined by Mahatma Gandhi to describe a new social order which he envisioned as being very different from the capitalist and communist systems prevalent at that time. Literally it means the "welfare of all."

With my Buddhist outlook when I came across the word "Sarvodaya" I interpreted it as the "awakening of all." The word "Buddha" itself literally means "awakened one." Those of us who aspire to enlightenment or are bodhisattvas are those who tread the Buddha Way, or the path of awakening. We should therefore strive to awaken ourselves to the full as we strive for the awakening of all. I cannot awaken myself unless I help awaken others. Others cannot awaken unless I do. So it is an interconnected and dual process of awakening oneself and others which we have chosen in the Sarvodaya Movement.

Today we work in more than a third of the country's villages. Our language and philosophy have spread throughout the country and are used, although in a superficial way for the most part, even by the government authorities in many of their development programmes. The Sarvodaya objective is to create a society that is neither rich nor poor, where every individual, family and community is awakened to a more contented, peaceful and just life. These small units should be the fundamental human groups that should build a new, just and non-violent global society.

I believe that national and international political and economic structures should be solidly restructured on a base of human-centered social and community organisations in order to create a better world. It is in such a global society that the awakening or well being of all will best be ensured. Therefore, we can see that the Sarvodaya ideal for the future is different from the capitalist or socialist models. Sarvodaya does not accept the idea of a welfare state, but believes in a welfare society. It does not accept centralisation of political and economic power and strives to build minimally controlled and mostly self-regulated communities.

The decisive factor in building such a society is the mutuality and the community that the people succeed in building to manage their resources and environment. With a variety of well integrated community development programmes Sarvodaya is trying to achieve this objective. Our way has been to start in the villages by



working with children and their mothers in thousands of pre-schools, linking these to home garden production and marketing, saving the income, engaging in community ventures in which the entire community gets together to plan and execute their projects, and creating opportunities for income generation, thereby catering to millions of people at the base of society.

In this task, Sarvodaya has taken into consideration several sectors of national life. When considering the national problems, there are two ways to deal with them. One is at the macro level. Generally, the managers of macro level national problems are the governments, inter-governmental agencies, multinational companies and large financial institutions. But their concern is to ensure that the macro aggregates show a quantitative growth and to preserve the status quo so that power remains in the small coteries in whom it is already vested.

On the other hand, there are those who are at the receiving end. They are the individuals, families and communities at the base of society who, at best are provided with handouts and wage labour in highly dependent and degrading conditions. When the macro managers fail to deliver the goods, those at the base have to carve out their futures for themselves. The Sarvodaya Movement caters to this category of people. Therefore, Sarvodaya's agenda does not coincide with that of the macro managers with the result that Sarvodaya has often had to face extreme harassment and obstacles to its work.

## **The Second Phase**

The 36 years since we started Sarvodaya activities can be broadly divided into two periods. The early period was one in which we took it for granted that what we were doing was self-evidently good and done by using good means. For example, we exerted a conscious effort to transform certain established norms relating to the highness and lowness of people by birth, which we believed should be corrected.

On the other hand, there was no similar conscious effort on the part of those who enjoyed the privileges of the status quo to

discredit our early work. The main reason for this was that we did not confront them, but rather through our own constructive work with the unprivileged we gave the privileged the opportunity to recognise the injustice of these social and political processes for themselves. As a result, over a period of about 30 years we were able to implement a number of programmes. Some may have been pioneered by other organisations. But we were able to give them a cohesive power and make them a part of the community, and not something imposed upon them, because we ourselves were a part of the community. Therefore, our activities became integrated with the community in a total social philosophy.

However, as the community we worked with outside the usual confrontational areas became larger, finally a point came where those who were the most privileged in the established order began to feel threatened. This coincided with an unprecedented threat to the survival of the entire social structure that led, in the late 1980s, to the need for a violent suppression of armed insurrections against the government in which no less than a 100,000 people are estimated to have lost their lives. In this crisis the forces of the established order began to release processes against the changes that we were trying to bring about.

For months on end I became the primary target of a hate campaign in the state media and had to face innumerable anonymous death threats. Discriminatory administrative actions were also taken against Sarvodaya to cripple us financially and legally. But instead of weakening us these blows strengthened us internally and gave us an unprecedented public sympathy as a people's movement that not even a most powerful government could fell. In the meantime, there was a change in the Head of State. The new President, His Excellency D.B. Wijetunga immediately removed all sanctions against us. All the elements of social progress that we had been collecting in the 36 years of our work began to come together, and as in an ayurvedic mixture of medicines put to the boil, out of the fire is emerging something that is entirely unlike anything that was done in the past.

The response is in thousands of places in thousands of ways. As the goal formulates itself Sarvodaya responds by formulating its macro responses as actions and not as reactions. We have

always tried to stay away from reactions, especially in situations of crisis, because they usually originate in the baser instincts of greed, ill-will and ignorance. So instead of reacting at Sarvodaya we act on the basis of value systems that uphold truth, non-violence and selflessness.

### **A Course of Action**

At the present time Sarvodaya's response to the challenge of uplifting the underprivileged involves the following processes. The first revolves around the need to conserve the life support systems of the people. For any living organism to survive it needs certain conditions to be satisfied. Among these are living soil with microbes and bacteria. But the utilisation of lethal chemicals devitalises the soil. The use of heavy machinery to till it destroys the interconnectedness of every particle of soil. Water is another example of a necessary condition for life that is being subjected to the same processes of destruction.

This leads us to the people's action to educate and conscientise the community to the great danger threatening the entire living world. Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of actions Sarvodaya has commenced. The first is to prevent further gratuitous destruction of the environment. The second action we are embarked upon is to repair the damage already done by environmentally harmful projects such as massive water dams which have caused great dislocation to people who have been forced to move out of those areas, and to join them in struggling to get some representation on the state authorities that control the flow of water.

As these example illustrate, when the life support systems of people are destroyed by taking away from the right to the community control over resources, their livelihoods also change. When the family as a whole ceases to be producers, and dependent on external handouts, their morale collapses. The same applies to communities of people as well. They have to go outside of the community to earn their daily bread. It becomes a general migration of people who are willing to sell their labour as cheaply as the market dictates, either to the Middle Eastern countries, or to garment factories, hotels, turf accountants (horse gambling) and

taverns. Everything becomes export oriented for a life style that is advertisement and wants-based.

The result is that lifestyles that were based on needs become cash-based and dependent. As a consequence of their life styles being destroyed indebtedness grows, at an individual and community level to commercial banks and finance companies, and at the national level to the World Bank and IMF.

The increased burdens and sufferings heaped upon the poor by those international financial institutions have led them to engage the services of publicity managers and advertisers, to sweeten the bitter reality of the impact of their policies. They have become no different from the private profit-making businesses that advertise their wares on the open market, nor from the discredited politicians who paste up posters on the walls of other people's residences proclaiming their services to the community.

Lured and enticed by the glamour and falsehoods of the much advertised consumerist way of life people leave their families and go outside the village, sometimes abroad, in vastly increased numbers to work and earn a cash income. But many end up alienated from their families and from themselves as well. At a national level, the government repays its debt obligations with the money earned by women workers in the Middle East, who are often exploited and debased in their helplessness, and from women who leave their families to work under conditions of great physical and emotional hardship in export-oriented garment factories.

In responding to this priority need, Sarvodaya seeks as its second course of action to build on and improve the existing life styles of people so that there is sustainable "right livelihood." On the one hand, we believe in a no-poverty no-affluence lifestyle based on moderation. Our objective is to build a lifestyle free of poverty, through our ten Basic Needs Satisfaction programme with a clean environment, an adequate supply of pure water, a balanced diet, simple clothing, simple housing, primary health care, basic energy needs and communication, education facilities and satisfying people's spiritual and cultural needs. This programme does not require the massive financial investments



that are poured into macro projects, but it requires removing the most severe obstacles to people's empowerment in the form of centralised structures.

A simple life style is particularly relevant when the limits to the planet's capacity to sustain an extravagant materially affluent life style has become clear. On the other hand, the value of such a life style in promoting human happiness, even among the global minority fortunate enough to enjoy it, is open to question. To those of us who believe that a contented society is one that strives for spiritual fulfilment, an affluent life style in which desires are artificially created and easily satisfied will be a distraction. This is the reason Lord Buddha advised us to avoid both extremes of self-mortification and self-indulgence.

In turn, those who see the extravagant life styles of a few and live in that atmosphere will find it difficult to resist the natural temptation to imitate it. Because of the interconnection of the life styles of everyone, the world needs to reorient itself to life styles that are neither poor nor affluent, so that the lifestyles of a few will not undermine that of the many. But for us who are social workers, changing the life styles of the affluent may not be possible at this time except through the examples that we ourselves set with our own personal life-styles.

On the other hand, we believe in people finding a right livelihood rather than employment in order to earn a money income. Productive employment does not necessarily mean money earning jobs. On the other hand, it can stand for anything that is creative and productive that contributes to the well-being of the family, and in a broader context, to the well-being of the community. For instance, if a grandmother should look after a grandchild instead of being sent to a "Home for Elders," is that not productive employment of the highest kind even though it may not figure in the national income accounts? On the other hand, if a mother should go to the Middle East to earn dollars, but leaves behind a broken home, how productive can we say that employment is?

Therefore, when we speak of right livelihood, every activity done within the family and community that adds to the quality of

life becomes important, and full employment in the classical capitalist or marxist sense of wage labour becomes a secondary matter. Older children will look after younger children and help their families with household chores and with socialising. Going to the temple, learning to meditate, or to dance, taking part in community projects, all of this can become a part and parcel of a productive process that adds to the quality of personal fulfilment. That is real life, in which there is no alienation of the individual from the family and community or even from oneself and everyone gets integrated into a total living organism.

Our third action is to strengthen community organisations to be more self-reliant. The size of the community should be one in which every member, young and old, is able to know and communicate with other members. In face to face communities of this kind there will be less opportunity for people to evade personal responsibility and seek refuge behind faceless institutions, as is happening in countries such as the United States where interpersonal conflicts end up in the courts of law instead of being resolved by the persons concerned in a humane manner. Along with the destruction of the family unit, the destruction of the values systems has been an inevitable accompaniment.

Culture is a way of screening what one will accept and reject from the outside. In the past it was shameful for a young man to carry a glass of alcohol in front of his elders. But now new value systems based on the needs of the dominant greed-based system have emerged and with it the indigenous culture, health practices and arts, instead of going through a transformation have been cut off entirely and marginalised.

In this context, Sarvodaya's task has been to conserve and nurture what has been left out, such as the traditional ayurvedic medicinal system and collective traditions of working together at the village level, so that these traditions may be revitalised, and to take people's action so that further intrusions into people's value structures may be reversed.

The way that society was organised in the past was a sustainable one which we still can find in the least affected parts of rural society. The village society was not one that was

sustained by coercive power. Of course there were punishments for crimes, but much more important were the religious and social sanctions that prevented people from disturbing the life support systems and value bases that existed. But with the erosion of the built-in controls in society due to the ridiculing of their spiritual and moral fountains, they have had to be replaced by central authority.

Over the past three years our own experience has shown us that the most dangerous anti-people instruments used by the vested interests, which act through the governmental mechanisms, are the state-controlled mass media and physical violence. Therefore it has become necessary to take twofold action in this area as well. This is our fourth process in which one course of action is to sustain and strengthen the justice and humanity that exist in the presently powerful instruments of central control. We realise that there is no point attacking and condemning them as this will only cause them to close their eyes more to the injustice and inhumanity to which they are a party. Within the constraints, they can play a minimum role in a positive direction.

On the other hand, we need to build alternative instruments to counter the overall damage done by them. This is where the forces of non-violence and popular community-based methods need to be strengthened. Achieving this demands overcoming fear and sharpening the noblest in every human being. It is here that Sarvodaya is releasing processes of awakening that can lead to a critical mass of spiritual consciousness to transcend untruth, violence and self-centredness. This is a guideline for the future as I see it at this moment.

### **The Future Self-governing Communities**

Sarvodaya's idea of a sustainable future is one in which such communities at the base multiply horizontally within the country and have international linkages. Once a sufficient number of sustainable communities are organised throughout the world, controlling and managing their own physical, social and structural environments, then a global process of creating a new society will start to evolve, both horizontally and from the bottom up.

The exchange of news, information and opinions made possible by modern communications systems offers limitless possibilities in education, science, public health and commerce that is accessible to all, even to those traditionally neglected in rural areas. As a global community we still possess an immense wealth of spiritual wisdom. We use this mostly in our own limited ways confined to ourselves and our families. But as a global community we also possess an extremely advanced body of technology and scientific knowledge.

Unfortunately, those who have access to this have used it mostly to benefit centralised structures and the groups who control them while devastating nature and marginalizing the vast millions who have had no access to the power that modern science confers. Now the time has come when modern science and technology on the one hand and spiritual wisdom on the other have to be synthesised to build a global community of global villages in which all people can be participant-beneficiaries and understand things as they really are.

To the extent that the present macro managers realise the importance of this kind of horizontal global awakening, the process can be expedited. The need for coercive instruments of government will no longer exist. Millions of self-governing communities will emerge and to a large extent they will be self-sustaining. They will live in harmony with nature and close to nature.

Every cultural and subcultural entity, both large ethnic minorities and small ones such as the Veddhas (aborigines) of Sri Lanka will be preserved and add lustre to society. Today just 20 core families belonging to that ancient people manage to survive in spite of every effort taken by the macro planners to absorb them and their lands into their macro targets of production and efficiency. They offer a model of simple and environmentally low cost living on land that has been degraded by illegal timber merchants backed by the very governmental authorities set up to protect the forest. Despite their request that a few thousand acres of forest land be set apart for them to live in their request is denied, while tens of thousands of acres of such land is given to multinational corporations.



Ultimately, the fact is that values such as truth, non-violence, selflessness, morality, forgiveness manifest themselves best in our lives as individuals, and to some extent in our families and communities. Certainly they cannot take root and grow in governments or corporations which by nature are spiritually dead, mindless and heartless. Those who are within them may be good hearted but the very nature of large scale institutions does not allow these people to use their spiritual values in controlling and directing these soulless structures. Therefore, finding alternative systems and keeping them in place and in working order in Sri Lanka and elsewhere is the responsibility of all concerned world citizens with social workers giving the lead.

---

*(Text of Keynote Address delivered by Dr A.T. Ariyaratne at the opening session of the Social Workers World Conference held in Colombo on July 9, 1994)*

## SOME THOUGHTS ON YOUTH ENDING HUNGER

Lord Buddha in one of His discourses raised questions such as What is one? What is two? What is three? What is four? and so on. To each of these questions He gave an answer - His answer to the first question.

*Eka Nama Kin (What is one?)" was  
'Sabbe Satta Aharattithika'  
(All beings sustain themselves on food)'.*

All sentient beings need physical food to sustain their physical bodies. Similarly, to sustain their mind, bodies, streams of consciousness, they also do need kinds of mental food acquired through the continuous responses given by the mind to the outside stimuli received from the five senses or created by the mind itself from its earlier conditioning.

Our personality is nothing but a name - form or mind-body combination continuously undergoing transformation, most of the time in our lives, is conveniently forgotten by us. We in our ignorance like to believe that our life and all that go with it are permanently ours and we will always possess them and enjoy life. Only when we have to depart from our loved ones or we ourselves become victims of disease, old age and death then only will we begin to worry and concern ourselves with the follies we have committed through endless desires, ill-will and ignorance.

Today, this occasion where leaders and organisations of youth have come together from 20 states of India to formally launch the 'Youth Ending Hunger Movement' is a unique opportunity for a reappraisal of what was right and what was wrong in the past in similar efforts. It is also an opportunity to look afresh at the problems of power and affluence as well as powerlessness and poverty and the consequences of both these human situations and creations, on the overall plight of humans, other living beings and the planetary environment as a whole.

Isn't this a great opportunity for us to ask the question - 'Is there any difference between the Affluence of Poverty and

Powerlessness and the Poverty of Affluence and Power?'. The consequences of both these conditions can be seen in the form of spirituo-moral degradation, societal violence, environmental and ecological hazards, new terminal diseases that have taken global epidemic proportions and threats to the very existence of life on this planet. Shouldn't we banish both Poverty and Affluence, and, Powerlessness and Power, and discover a new middle path for survival?

When The Hunger Project was started in 1977 in the West Coast of United States of America it was a great forward step taken by concerned and committed individuals in that part of the World. "We can end Hunger in the World", was their positive cry. They committed themselves to the sustainable end of Hunger. The idea came closer home when The Hunger Project - India, headquartered in Bombay, was launched in the 1980s. Now with headquarters in Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, New Delhi, capital of India, the Youth Ending Hunger Movement has been launched with the participation of youth leaders on an all India basis. The Minister of Youth Affairs, Hon'ble Shri Mukul Wasnik and Hon'ble Dr. (Mrs.) Najma Heptullah, Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha are present here to give us all the guidance, inspiration and support that will be necessary for the success of a great venture of this magnitude.

It is my personal view that this term 'NGO' Non-Governmental Organisations should go out of usage. We should substitute this with a more positive, less alienating terminology such as people's development organisations or social sector organisations.

People are supreme in democratic countries. They establish through their elected representatives' governments. Governments have different organs exercising the power entrusted to them by the people such as the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary and other bodies to which power is delegated. When all these are taken into account they exercise an enormous power over the very people on whose behalf these institutions are established. It is common knowledge that these powerful institutions by themselves have not succeeded in eradicating poverty, disease, ignorance, social violence, communal dissensions, terrorism, wars and other forms of social ills we are faced with today.

Nowadays, there is a common belief and even a general acceptance of the idea that the failures on the part of the state or the public sector can only be remedied by the private sector.

I come from a country where this so-called privatization panacea, sometimes euphemistically called peoplisation is carried out to an extreme form assuming that all the shortcomings of the state as far as the economy is concerned can be corrected by this substitution. I personally do not subscribe to this view.

No honest ruler in a democracy will be so hypocritical as to say he or she is ruling the people on Asokan principles of government. We are now living in different times. The system of politics and governance we have unfortunately inherited and nurtured from colonial times does not leave much scope for such 'bodhisatva' idealisation of political conduct. In the same token, no honest private sector industrialist or businessman will say he or she is striving to eradicate poverty and end hunger. Generally, the politician is motivated by power consideration while the private sector is motivated by profit considerations. There may, of course, be few exceptions to both these, where service motives are uppermost in some minds.

When it comes to the so-called NGOs sector or what I call the people's self-development sector, as human beings, without any political or business labels attached to them, politicians and private sector individuals can merge themselves into a people's organisation or movement where they don't exert an exclusive and decisive power. They become an integral part of a mass people's movement with its own ethos and identity. This can be compared to the Freedom Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. It was a people's movement with distinct principles such as Truth, Non-violence, Sacrifice and Commitment.

Diverse groups with different ethical principles could submerge their self-interests for the greater goal of winning freedom. Isn't there a similar way for all to come together to fight against Hunger at this time?

As a young man, I remember somewhere in Punjab, addressing a mass gathering Shri Jawaharlal Nehru the Prime Minister of

India say, "Our hands can do it. Our hands can be made to do it. And conditions can be created to do it." These words still echo in my ears and I do strongly believe we can still revive this spirit of work.

It is stated that the largest section of the world's poor live in India - that is nearly a quarter billion people. Can we bring affluence to these people? Or should we strive to bring affluence to them even if it is possible? Instead, can we help them to create a state of no poverty society by their own efforts? Isn't it a more meaningful exercise where targets can be realized by our own efforts?

We in the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka have rejected the idea that poverty is unavoidable. We also have rejected the desirability of an affluent society. We believe that the creation of a no-poverty society is within our reach.

The creators of such a new society are the poor themselves. The process is called self-development. Self-reliance, community participation and self-satisfaction of basic needs on a planned basis are the principles on which this self-development process is released.

Sharing of labour, broadly defined as shramadana or the capacity of a community of people to share their labour, feelings, thoughts, and time for the general well-being of the community is a strategy that can be adopted to initiate far reaching changes in their quality of life. It can bring about an awakening of people leading to their empowerment.

In 1921, Gandhiji said "To a people famishing and idle the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages."

In 1931, he repeated "How am I to talk of God to the millions who have to go without two meals a day? To them God can only appear as bread and butter."

In 1944 he said "Being a villager myself, I know the condition in the villages. I know village economics. I tell you that the



pressure from top crushes those at the bottom: All that is necessary is to get off their backs."

In spite of vast improvements in physical infrastructures and super structures in our nation states the conditions of the rural masses have not comparatively improved. The worst affected are the weaker sections of the people such as the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, women and children and socially and educationally backward classes. No doubt, these sections of people over the years have been centrally supported at various times but with very marginal results. According to a recent paper submitted to the Indian Association for Research and Action of Social Justice Shri Tarlok Singh states that 'Despite the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, between 1989 and 1990, nearly 77,000 cases of atrocities were reported against scheduled castes and more than 7,000 against Scheduled Tribes.

Social, Economic and Political injustices are closely linked and inseparable, they have to be tackled in its entirety and an integrated approach is needed. Gandhiji and Vinobhaji over again emphasised the spiritual and moral foundations on which social, economic and political institutions have to be built.

Injustices begin as individuals frailties. Unless they are checked at the very beginning they multiply and become group practices. As a matter of course, injustices become institutionalised and become extremely difficult to be corrected. It gives rise to counter-injustice bringing about grave situations of violent social conflict. Entire societies and nations become engulfed in these and develop into wars even across national borders. The counterwailing forces can be generated only by upholding justice and non-violence beginning with even small attempts by committed individuals and groups.

We should begin with individuals, families and villages. Personality Awakening, Family Awakening and Village Awakening can be our objectives. If one young man or woman, educated and trained, gets committed to uplift a village with 200 families, India needs only about 2,50,000 such youth. May be each state needs 10,000 to 15,000 such committed youth. This is

not an impossible number to be motivated, trained and placed with village communities. The challenge can be accepted by all those who are present here to inaugurate the Youth Ending Hunger Movement, a people's development movement.

To make this movement a success, the Government as well as the private sector have to commit themselves to accept the NGOs or the people's sector as an equal partner. It is necessary to provide the same kind of legal recognition, concessionary tax, banking and loan facilities, infrastructural, technical and marketing support and so on. Nothing short of 'getting off their backs' should be the common objective.

Already the Government of India, to my knowledge more than any other South Asian Country, is working in close supportive co-operation with NGOs. If there are any impediments still left these should be removed by mutual consultation.

Both Governments and peoples of poorer countries are caught up in an international unjust market system. For example, while we talk of ending hunger some rich countries are paying farmers not to produce food grains so that they can keep the price mechanism, stable. People dying of malnutrition and hunger are less important to them than their Supply and Demand theories. We must liberate ourselves from this vicious economic system. Gandhiji, Vinobhaji and other great teachers of India have shown us an indigenous way of achieving this liberation. On this day, let us reaffirm our faith in them.

---

*(Lecture delivered at Vishva Yuvak Kendra in New Delhi - 1994)*



## BUDDHISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Buddha lived in the 6th century BC. Upto today, the end of the 20th century, His Teachings continue to influence generation after generation of people in different climes and different positions in life. What is popularly known as Buddhism is in its detail not identical or similar in all aspects for these different peoples. Therefore, when we discuss about Buddhism in the 21st century, firstly, we have to arrive at a consensus on certain fundamental facts, practices and principles of Buddhism which can be generally accepted by all those who are followers of the Buddha.

In the second instance we have to identify those issues and problems that human societies are faced with now and will face during the 21st century about to dawn and discuss possible ways and means we can adopt to find solutions.

Thirdly, besides Buddhism and Buddhists there are other religious, non-religious and irreligious systems of knowledge, practices and structures with whom we have to co-exist and interact. What are the acceptable Buddhist forms of conduct in these situations?

Lastly, as a firm believer in both the precept and practice I believe we should adopt A Universal Charter for Buddhist Practice in the 21st Century. Based on this charter different Buddhist groups in different places can develop portfolios of activities which together can make a significant contribution to human society in the 21st century. What follows in this paper is a modest elaboration of these four ideas.

All Buddhists irrespective of the school of Buddhism, such as THERAVADA, MAHAYANA or VAJRAYANA to which they belong, accept Buddha as their supreme teacher or the embodiment of the highest level of enlightenment they can attain by following the different paths shown by the Dhamma. From our childhood as Theravada Buddhists we have been chanting Pali stanzas like the following:

*“Buddham Jeevitha Pariyantham Saranam Gaccami. Ye ca Buddha Atitaca, Ye ca Buddha Anagata, Paccuppanaca ye*

*Buddha, Ahan vandami sabbada. Natthi me saranam annam, Buddho Me saranam varam. Buddho yo kalitho doso, Buddho Kamatutam mama."*

This means: ("I shall take life-long refuge in the Buddha. I worship all the Buddhas of the past, the future and the present. I have no other refuge than the refuge in the Buddha. I beg forgiveness from the Buddha for my defilements.")

Then we chant the names of twenty eight immediate past Buddhas who appeared during the past world cycles and also worship the future Buddhas like the Ariya Metteyya Buddha.

It is my view that the worship of Siddhatta Gotama who was born in 624 B.C. and who attained Supreme Enlightenment at the age of 35, who thereafter came to be known as Buddha, the Awakened One, is in reality a worship of all Buddhas past, future and present. Our supreme goal as Buddhists is to attain this level of awakening. So the historical figure of Gautama Buddha as the Awakened One closest to our times or as the embodiment of enlightenment or as the symbol of realization of the supreme goal by all the Buddhas should not be a matter for dissension or for ideological differences.

All Buddhists should accept Buddha as our Supreme Teacher. Our shrine rooms in popular Buddhism can be adorned with numerous images of Buddhas and this does no harm to our practice of the Dhamma.

A person becomes initiated as a Buddhist when he takes refuge by his own free will in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha. This is the accepted norm among Theravada Buddhists. If the other Buddhist sects and schools accept these Three Refuges, namely, Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha this is going to be, in my opinion, a major breakthrough in uniting Buddhists the world-over. Such a unity among Buddhists is a sine qua non both for the protection and advancement of Buddha Sasana and for the facilitation of the contribution Buddhists can make to the global society to face the myriad problems confronted today..

We are aware of the doctrinal differences that stand in our way to such an acceptance of the Three Refuges as a general requirement to be a Buddhist. However this should not be considered as an insurmountable obstacle as all Buddhist Sects the world over have already established closer links as never before in recent history. Perhaps the general advancement of transportation and communication systems have contributed much to the narrowing of this gap. We have to go another step forward.

With regard to the Dhamma, the doctrine or the teaching undoubtedly there are widely different interpretations perpetuated even within the same sect. Similarly the interpretation given to the word Sangha differs from the earlier version particularly among the non-Asian Buddhist groups. There are two terms generally used in the texts, SAVAKA SANGHA and Bhikkhu SANGHA. Savaka Sangha referred to the group of four - Bhikkhu, Bhikkuni, Upasaka, Upasika. Bhikkhu Sangha refers only to the monks. This problem also can be sorted by dialogue.

At this point I would like to make a remark which I think is of critical importance. Doctrinal differences will not confuse Buddhist scholars. They will hold on to their opinions based on their understanding and will change them if they are convinced that it is necessary to change their opinions based on new insights. In the same token non-practitioner Buddhist scholars, or non-Buddhist scholars, in my opinion are not so concerned about simple norms, customs, practices, beliefs and so on which are important to ordinary and simple Buddhists to keep their family and community life going and living in peace and harmony. If the doctrinal differences are taken too far as to disturb the 'Saddha,' the faith, of the ordinary Buddhists this is damaging to the Buddhist community as well as to the society in general.

In an enlightened age like today at least for the sake of ordinary lay Buddhist followers we have to reach consensus on certain fundamental teachings and precepts. After taking refuge in the Triple Gem we go on to make a promise to ourselves that we shall observe the Five Precepts. We know how difficult it is to observe even one precept fully when we take into consideration that these precepts have to be observed in Deed, Word and Thought (kayena vaca cittena). Still the very knowledge that we

have to take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha and strive to observe the Precept of Non-killing, Non-stealing, Non-sexual-misconduct, Non-lying and Non-Consumption of Intoxicants, if we are to call ourselves Buddhists, gives us points of reference and norms for proper conduct. Another aspect of Panca Sila is Non-harming others, Non-taking what is not given, Non-fulfilling one's desires by unfair means, Non-lying and non-making oneself intoxicated. Sila or Morality is the edifice on which a spiritual life leading to Samadhi or Concentration of Mind and Panna or Wisdom have to be cultivated. Therefore, before going into doctrinal differences it is an important practical necessity for us to reach agreement on these aspects of Buddhism.

For Theravada Buddhists the word Sangha has a very special meaning and significance. It means more than the literal meaning of a community. It is even more than the saffron robed monks of the present day. It is a spiritual community which began at the time of the Buddha with his first five disciples and continues to this day and will continue into the future. It is the third Noble Gem. This term Sangha, therefore, should not be loosely used. In my opinion it should be used for all Buddhist clergy of all sects who satisfy certain commonly agreed principles. Lay Buddhists should not use the word Sangha. Instead they can get used to a word like the Upasaka.

What is Sangha? Dr. W.G. Weeraratne, in his book *Buddhism For Every Man*, (published by the Sri Lanka National Library Services Board, Colombo) gives a lucid answer to this question:

“The whole congregation of disciples, who renounce lay life and join the Order of monks to live a full religious life according to the teachings of the Buddha, is called the Sangha. When a person decides to live a full religious life he has to bid farewell to all his kith and kin, renounce whatever worldly possessions he has, shave off his hair and beard, drape himself in a robe and seek permission from the congregation of monks to become one of its members. At the start Buddha himself ordained members, but as numbers began to increase, senior monks together with a specified number of members were permitted to perform the necessary ceremonies in connection with the admission of members to the Order. A newly admitted member has to be under the supervision



of a teacher and preceptor to learn the rules of conduct, discipline himself accordingly and learn the teachings of the Buddha. Learning the Dhamma, preaching it to laymen, and constant disciplining of the self are the many duties of a member of the Order of monks. They are forbidden to engage in earning wealth. The lay followers are expected to make donations of food, robes, medicines etc to them for their sustenance. A monk is expected to lead a pure and clean life and give religious instruction to the lay supporters in return to the munificence the lay people bestow on him. A monk has nothing that he may call his own and is expected to possess only his bare requisites, namely, three robes, a bowl, a razor, a needle, a girdle and a water strainer."

"A monk does not have a permanent place of residence. He may live in a monastery where other monks live, but none of them have any personal claim to its ownership. As long as a monk lives in a monastery he has a right to use its facilities in common with other residents. When a layman makes a gift to the monks, it is offered to the whole congregation, and the monks accept it on behalf of the whole congregation of monks past, present and future."

Today this situation may not exist in most places. At the same time there are even some places where monks do live up to this discipline and satisfy the conditions traditionally required of a monk. Therefore, it is my opinion that this ideal should be kept alive for posterity considering the number of people who are dissatisfied with their ordinary everyday lives and looking for an alternative way of living. Neither scientific explanations nor the traditional Judaeo-Christian explanation of things seem to be giving these people the satisfaction they are looking for. They are looking for something deeper, creative and practical which they can try out and live themselves. Some out of these people will certainly take to a monastic life and probe deeper and deeper into spiritual realms.

An excellent example can be cited from Sri Lanka, namely, the unique contribution made to Buddha Sasana by their piety, exemplary monastic life, scholarship and propagation of the Dhamma during this century by the internationally reputed western monks who lived in forest monasteries in Dodanduwa and



Kandy. The lead that the late Ven.Gnanatiloka, Ven. Gnanasatta, and Ven.Gnanaponika gave from the beginning of this century is continued today to the next century by the young Ven.Bodhi.

Similarly, in a few forest monasteries such as Kanduboda and Meethirigala in Sri Lanka local monks continue with monastic traditions giving benefits to a considerable number of local and foreign devotees. Great monks of the stature of late Ven. Mahasi Siyadaw of Burma and Ven.Buddhadasa of Thailand and the contribution they made for the modern Buddhist revival are internationally known. I am sure in the Mahayana tradition too a considerable number of monks and monasteries do exist which have made a tremendous contribution to spread the Dhamma of the Enlightened one. We have to do everything possible to protect the quality of these monasteries and assist the monks to continue with their traditions conducive to a spiritual life aimed at full enlightenment.

This does not mean that innovations and changes in keeping with changing times and the environment are not to be encouraged. On the other hand all encouragement and recognition should be given to those genuine spiritual endeavours by committed individuals. One such successful innovative effort is the Western Buddhist Order and the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order founded by the Venerable Sangharakkhita Maha Thero of England. This is a new Buddhist Movement founded by him in 1967 in response to a felt-need in the West to encourage and help people actually to practice and live the teachings of the Buddha. This has now become an international movement for Buddhist study, meditation and practice helping individuals who have gone for Refuge to Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

Ven. Sangharakkhita (in his book Human Enlightenment - Windhorse Publications) explains what a Spiritual Community does in the following words: " ....in general, the members of the Spiritual Community do two things for the world. First of all, they keep the spiritual community itself in existence. One might say that it is good for the world such a thing as the Spiritual Community should simply be there, good that there should be people around who are dedicated to the spiritual life, dedicated to the development of skilful states of mind. This is good because it helps to develop a more wholesome atmosphere in the world.

“Secondly, members of the spiritual community help the world by building a bridge between the world and the spiritual community -or at least laying down a few stepping stones. They do this by getting together, in teams of four, or five , or more, and conducting various activities conducive to the development of skillful mental states. These activities help people to evolve from the worldly plane to the mixed plane, perhaps even from the mixed plane to the spiritual plane.....

“In this way the members of the Spiritual Community, or those individuals who are committed to the ideal of human Enlightenment, - committed to the attainment of higher levels of consciousness and insight, - help people in the world to develop more and more skilful thoughts, to grow in contentment, in love, and in understanding, and to indeed, for themselves, the meaning of Spiritual Community.”

I should state here and recognize also the tremendous contribution that His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Ven.Thich Nat Han and other eminent Buddhist spiritual leaders have made to awaken the Buddhist spirituality in the world particularly in the western hemisphere.

The world, although it is divided into various countries and peopled by different faiths, is made smaller by today's transport and communication systems. Buddhism in the Twenty First Century should adjust itself to this modern development so that the message of the Buddha could be delivered to every one in a language he or she understands in a simple form.

We should try to do this with the leadership of countries such as Taiwan, Korea, Thailand and Japan. These countries have the distinct advantage of being Buddhist while also being economically and technologically advanced. These countries are powerful nations still preserving the message of the Buddha. The majority of the Buddhist world consists of economically poor countries. Buddhism and the Buddhist way of life were suppressed due to the lack of this economic and political power. Moreover modern technology is found in its most developed form in these countries. Herein lies the greatest resource for development of Buddhism in the 21st century.

In the future the concept and the practice of world Buddhism should be disseminated from these countries. With their leadership they should form a Supreme Council to disseminate the Buddhist message to the entire world. Economically powerless Buddhists in poorer countries need this Council's help to escape from being the prey of over enthusiastic religious crusaders and fanatics who often attempt to convert them by spending large amounts of money they have at their disposal for proselytizing purposes. In my own country large numbers of poor Buddhists are converted by such people by offering them money, handouts, houses and jobs thus exploiting their ignorance and poverty. This is all done under the guise of social service and development of the poor.

Buddhism for tomorrow's world need not contain host of philosophical and practical details unintelligible to the common man. These could be left for scholarly debate and dialogue both among the Buddhists themselves and with those of other religions. Buddhism should not be "marketed" with brand names such as Theravada, Mahayana or Vajranana etc. The simple faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha, the Five Principles of Ethics (Panca Sila), The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eight-fold Path are sufficient to formulate a simple form of Buddhism acceptable to all. An essential part of this simple Buddhism for our simple people is the content of those parts that all should know to chant by heart and know the meaning. While the original language used by the Buddha, namely, Pali is the common language used for chanting, these can be chanted in one's own language as well, as is already done today. A simple life story of the Buddha, a selected number of simple but important sutras from all traditions will complete the basic requirement. Similarly, in the area of meditational practice there should be consensus reached about two or three forms of elementary meditation commonly accepted. In this exercise I would recommend that the Buddhist audience we should keep in mind should be of an educational level not higher than the Junior School Level. When the foundation is laid in this manner each Buddhist community will develop their own higher levels of Buddhist learning and practice.

Once this step is taken Buddhist scholars can take the more difficult next step of building up consensus on higher and more philosophical teachings such as the 'Paticca Samuppada' doctrine (The Theory of Dependent co-arising). Encouragement and support to the centres of advanced Buddhist learning and higher meditation, like Vipassana (Insight) or Zen meditation centres, I mentioned before, should also be taken simultaneously. My plea is that from simple Buddhist Communities at the grassroots level to the Buddhist scholars and leaders at the highest levels in the world there should be a link, an identity, 'A Golden Thread' running through them all and binding them together. Then only the Buddhist influence can be effectively exerted on human civilization at the turn of the century.

In speaking of a simple form of Buddhism we should not forget today's pressing economic, political, social and environmental problems and show how these could be addressed in a Buddhist way. The Universal Charter For Buddhist Practice mentioned earlier fits into this particular context. In the Charter we should make a very clear statement on what Buddhists mean by development, for what kind of Buddhist life-style we want development, what we are doing about it, how we advocate the use of natural and human resources, Buddhist indicators of development and so on. There should be no omission of any aspect of development. Human Rights, for example, is spoken of in every world assembly. The Buddha not only emphasized Human Rights as well as duties; but He went still further and spoke of the rights of all living beings including animals too. His concept of universal love extended beyond human beings to animals and even plants. It still goes further even to cover non-human beings. May be in the Twenty First Century in the solar system we may discover other worlds inhabited by non-human beings. The relevance of Buddhist thinking here need not be unduly elaborated.

The awareness of one's environment both physical and social is underscored today. Environmental groups in every society attempt to create this awareness and even conduct active campaigns against formidable governments and industries to preserve the environment. The Buddha had spoken of "Patirupa Desa Vasoca", living in a congenial environment, as one of the blessings in life. To me the entire Ratana Sutta is a discourse by



the Buddha on ecological sustainability. He went beyond physical and social environment by adding a psychological or spiritual dimension to the environment.

The Panca Niyama Dhamma, the Five Cosmic Laws, namely, Bija Niyama (Cosmic Law pertaining to Genes), Utu Niyama (Seasons), Kamma Niyama (Causality), Dhamma Niyama (Phenomena) and Citta Niyama (Mind or Consciousness), taught in the Buddha Dhamma covers every aspect of environment.

Nowhere is this dimension observed as when Buddhists practise universal love. In the same manner a mother loves her one and only child one should learn to love all living beings irrespective of race, religion, country, class etc. This is a process which starts with oneself, one's loved ones, neighbours, community, country, the world, the world system unto infinity (*mettanca sabba lokasmin manasambhavaye aparimana*). By infusing the environment with compassion or love you enrich it more going beyond the physical and social aspects. The fallout from non-compassion or hatred is greater in its damage than even the fallout from an enormously destructive nuclear weapon.

The relevance of Buddhism to the modern world should be spelt out in the Charter by observing and looking at the present world problems. The insatiable production of armaments and their inordinate sale emanate from endless greed to earn money. The Buddhist countries could get together and at least save their countries from the tentacles of the merciless international arms dealers who promote dissensions leading to wars. A world council of Buddhist countries led by countries such as Taiwan, Japan, Thailand and Korea, with economic power and communication technology to back them could answer this problem in a dignified and realistic way by promoting non-violence and peace. We should do everything to prevent the wrong kind of development being imposed on Buddhist communities who are still living in a pre-industrial type of society. The mistakes committed in the present industrial societies that gave rise to personal crimes, breakdown of the family life and sense of community, social crimes and political violence, bribery, corruption and wastage of non-renewable resources and so on should be avoided when new development planning is done for the present day poor



communities of the world. Every attention should be paid to countries like Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and so on where a new value-based sustainable development strategy can be followed. The Charter we propose can be a valuable guide to these nations and help them to avoid the pit-falls.

The worldwide problem of the manufacturing and sale of drugs is another area that should provide food for thought for the Buddhists. The drugs are produced by poor people who are exploited by the rich and powerful. Economic assistance to such people mainly in Buddhist countries would help to ease this problem at least to a satisfactory extent. The Buddhist way of dealing with serious problems like aids is another item that should be on our agenda.

Promoting a Buddhist Economic Philosophy and Co-operation among Buddhist communities based on the Universal Charter for Buddhist Practice will be the need of the 21st century. Some form of economic unity perhaps with a common currency, with free trade and travel, closer export and import systems and common defence can be an expected future development in our part of the world also. Although for us today this would appear not very probable, as Buddhists in the next century we would be compelled to think of practical ways and means to deal with such developments. But let us not wait for that time, but begin now itself.

The Buddha's message should go to everyone in every country of this world. As stated earlier a simple message in a way people could understand should be formulated taking the essence of Buddhism sans school labels. It should be the Blessed One's teaching given in every possible language, translated by a group of world Buddhist scholars. Let it go to our non-Buddhist brethren with whom we should co-exist with understanding, appreciation and intelligence.

Buddhism always appreciates other person's point of view. Therefore co-existence with other religious groups would not be a problem to Buddhists. This position of Buddhist teaching should be made clear to others so that no misunderstandings should arise. Not only religious differences but also social and cultural

variations, political and ideological differences are not obstacles for people to live peaceful lives.

At this point I would like to briefly mention about nearly four decades of effort I have put in with my colleagues to put Buddha's Teachings into a working model of development practice in Sri Lanka. I am referring to the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka. Sarvodaya means 'To Awaken All through Sharing.' In Sri Lanka Sarvodaya derived its inspiration from Buddhism and developed it accordingly. Although we owe our enormous gratitude to Mahatma Gandhi and his disciple Acharya Vinoba Bhawe, for the example they gave in trying to build a non-violent and sustainable society by people's participation in India, Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka is essentially based on Buddhist philosophy and practice as experienced by us. This Buddhist essence brought out by Sarvodaya is acceptable to non-Buddhists in Sri Lanka as well, and today both Buddhists and non-Buddhists in Sri Lanka and outside attempt to practise this development philosophy. I would like to make a personal plea for all those who are interested and committed to an alternative world order based on Buddhist philosophy and values which can be accepted by non-Buddhists as well, to come to Sri Lanka and have a closer look into what the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement has attempted to do for nearly four decades.

Sri Lanka is a country of South Asia where, for millenia, two traditions have prevailed and intertwined, a predominantly Buddhist tradition among the majority Sinhala community, and the lesser though no less vibrant Hindu tradition in the Tamil communities.

Accordingly, patterns of development which start at the grassroots and at high levels of disempowerment and human distress, must of necessity call upon visions for development which mobilize the family and the extended village society. In other words reaching to the very roots of indigenous culture, wisdom and spirituality - of whichever faith and belief- in our instance Buddhist-Hindu culture.

This was the road we took. A road we took both by necessity and intimate belief. A road which has proved immensely

successful, as over the four decades of labour, village communities progressed from a state of dire difficulty into awakened, dignified, confident and empowered individuals. We struggled hard under all odds and succeeded during this period in helping and taking the message to nearly 10,000 village communities in Sri Lanka out of a total of 24,000 to take to a path of self-development based on self-reliance and community participation.

In a society where social, economic and technological disparities are wide these communities need external assistance to supplement their self-help. This assistance initially came even modestly mainly from western donor agencies. At the beginning they did not try to impose their values or development methodologies on us and we formulated programmes on every aspect of development, welfare and advocacy and proved that cultural and spiritual value systems of our traditional societies could be preserved while we improve economically. In other words we found that Buddhist philosophy could be put into a modern development action. We found that there are non-violent and constructive ways of social transformation that can be brought about according to the Dhamma.

However we got into difficulties when our most important western donors drastically cut their grants giving various reasons such as budget cuts and aid being shifted to Africa and Eastern Europe. Nonetheless it is our belief that the reasons are deeper than budget cuts. Perhaps we have a conflict in value systems.

It is unfortunate for us here in the poorer parts of Asia that the western donors just do not grasp the deep spiritual and cultural dimensions necessary for real development and what these mean for the people. In essence, for the western donors, non-conformity with so-called normal patterns of materialistic development is not permissible, and certainly not worthy of consideration for funding. However there are plenty of funds with hidden agendas, that I mentioned before, that flow into poorer communities disrupting their traditional culture and values. This is the sorry fact we have encountered.

So we have to turn back to the East, to a pattern of culture we

understand and are understood by; indeed we want to turn back to the East, to the richer, developed, populations of the East and we would invite them to look at the Sarvodaya Model, built on Buddhist Tenets and Theory, and Indigenous Culture. Perhaps lessons from Sarvodaya will help in the reawakening of Buddhist Asia.

In Buddhism we have generosity - Dana as a cardinal, positive characteristic to be practised by Buddhists. Dana means the giving of physical, spiritual, psychological, cultural, social inspiration, motivation and assistance to others. It could be correctly interpreted by calling Dana, sharing of resources beginning from the economic to social, educational, cultural, spiritual and whatever other resources human beings possess. When you teach a skill to another it is Dana of the highest quality. When you counsel someone and help him or her to understand one's problems in a better way, it is Dana. In the next century Buddhists should re-interpret Buddhist positive values in the modern context, immediately useful, relevant and easily adaptable to human life of the times.

Today we observe how the world is in search of a meaningful development theory and practice. Development conceived purely along economic lines has not been able to do away with even abject primary poverty present all throughout the world. The international institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, UNDP etc. have miserably failed. The socialist facade has almost crumbled with the eventual fall of Soviet Power. The capitalist world led by the western powers is gradually realizing the contradictory nature of its own development theory. The thinking few in the west at least are questioning the sanity of their own theory of development.

In this context we the Buddhists should evolve the Buddhist theory of world development. Since Taiwan, Korea and Japan are developed countries it is nothing but correct for Buddhists in these countries to look back critically at their own past, derive inspiration from it, and try to give the rest of the Buddhist world the benefit of their experience. Your leadership in this area as scholars, entrepreneurs, politicians, journalists, publishers, economists, technologists etc. is greatly appreciated by the Buddhist world. You are the guiding lights for the rest of us in



less economically developed countries in Asia at the dawn of the Twenty First century. It is your decision that would not only affect Buddhists but every one else living in this small planet of ours - and may in the other planets too.

In conclusion and in summary I wish to state that the Buddhist Agenda for the 21st Century should necessarily include: (1) A clear establishment of a universal Buddhist identity for all Buddhists in the world with a generally accepted Statement on basic Buddhist Theory and Practice common to all Buddhists, (2) Encouragement of the existing institutions of Buddhist Scholarship, Higher Learning and Meditational Practice and Promotion of New ones, (3) Formulation and acceptance of A Universal Charter for Buddhists covering all aspects and giving it widest possible publicity, (4) Drafting of a Buddhist Theory of Development and An Action Plan and actively promoting and supporting its implementation in Buddhist communities initially, to meet challenges of poverty, powerlessness, disease, personal social and structural violence, terrorism, drug menace, civil wars, global bloody conflicts and degeneration of spiritual and moral standards of human society in general and, lastly, (5) the importance of newly affluent Buddhist countries in the East taking up the leadership to implement these, possibly with the organisation of a Supreme Buddhist Council, with a view to a world Buddhist Revival.

We are on the threshold of great discoveries. Among such discoveries, the re-discovery of our common faith, Buddhist teachings, to fit in with the aspirations and realities of a new world, would be the most formidable challenge. Let us accept this challenge. We can create the critical mass of spiritual consciousness needed to build a new world order in the twenty first century by motivating, organising and awakening the Buddhist communities in the world. Let us embark on this mission with a commitment and sacrifice.

---

*(A Presentation made to the 8th International Conference on Buddhism, sponsored by Ching Chueh Institute of Buddhist Studies held in Kaohsiung, Taiwan October 19 - 20, 1995)*



## **SUSTAINABLE VILLAGE BASED DEVELOPMENT: LOOKING BACK AT THE SARVODAYA DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE IN SRI LANKA**

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka is often cited as one of the oldest and largest endeavours in the world in the field of rural self development.

For example, the Human Development Report of 1993 published by the UNDP highlights a brief account of Sarvodaya. Similarly, many other international organisations including the World Bank and several UN agencies have written a number of positive reports about the achievements of this people's development movement founded on the principles of self-reliance, community participation and planned action.

With a background experience of over 35 years we may possess certain insights that could be helpful to the participants of this conference organised by the department of Civil Engineering of the Colorado State University. The deliberations we are going to have at this meeting will be used to produce a Report with certain recommendations. They will also result in a Manual and a follow-up programme. In my presentation I have decided to lay emphasis on the obstacles a people's village-based sustainable development programme has to face and surmount. The validity or otherwise of a blue print can only be determined when it is tried out under real life situations on the ground.

### **The Beginning**

Sarvodaya did not start with a blue print or with preconceived notions. It started with practice from which a theory evolved over a period of time. It still continues to evolve as the practice extends to new areas with every newly faced challenge.

The beginning was in the mid 1950-s when a group of young teachers and students decided to learn from the most depressed village communities. They did not intend only to observe, but also to serve them in whatever way they could. It was a kind of study-service project. The method adopted was for them to live in the village community and work with people sharing their time,

effort, knowledge and skills. An immediate goal was to accomplish certain physical tasks that would satisfy one or more basic needs of the community identified by the community itself. This was a gift of labour - in our language "*shramadana*". The Shramadana Movement became very popular among the young people as well as the villagers as it progressed from village to village.

The tasks accomplished by these shramadana camps ranged from construction of gravel roads, tank bunds, school and community centres, houses and toilets, wells and sanitation facilities to socio-economic family surveys of village communities, health and medical camps, literacy and adult education programmes. There was accomplished using the Principle of Giving or Sharing.

### Sharing, Morality and Meditation

*Dana* which means giving or sharing is a highly respected virtue in our society particularly in the rural society. This is a virtue that should be practised by all irrespective of one's social or economic status. It is the quality of giving that matters and not the quantity. If the giving is not in proportion to the quantity one possesses then it lacks quality. When it comes to shramadana everyone can gift one's labour to the best of his or her capacity to accomplish a community project. So one's readiness to share what one has with others for the betterment of all enhances one's acceptance and reputation in the community.

*Dana* in itself is incomplete unless it is accompanied by *Sila* which means Morality, the discipline one develops and expresses in one's thoughts, words and deeds. The basic minimum morality expected of an individual participating in shramadana camps is five-fold, namely, *Abstinence from destroying the life of beings, Abstinence from taking what is not given, Abstinence from sexual misconduct, Abstinence from false speech, and Abstinence from consuming intoxicating substances.*

Participating in a community activity where sharing and morality are held in high esteem helps an individual to develop his or her mental concentration and awareness. The local word for

developing one's mindfulness and concentration is *Bhavana*. In the English language one may call this meditation. The individual becomes part of the whole living world almost effortlessly by practising these three qualities of sharing, morality and meditation. Thus in a Shramadana Camp while one sees outside oneself certain material results such as roads, water systems, houses and so on, one begins to perceive within oneself an awakening personality progressively developing the qualities of *Loving Kindness, Compassionate Action, Detached Joy and Equanimity*.

### **Personality Awakening**

When people participate in Sarvodaya programmes they begin to gain an experiential insight into the interconnectedness of life. The breaking down of man-made barriers that separate people from one another and the witness of joy that occurs in others as a result of one's sacrificial actions take people beyond the place of intellectual understanding to a holistic appreciation of the unity of life. It begins to matter that what we do in one place affects people in another place. Perhaps we may not see them with our physical eyes but it affects them all the same. This applies as much to those who cut down the Brazilian rain forests and deprive the planet of its lungs, as it does to those who consume to the point of satiation in one part of the world while others starve elsewhere.

A participant in Sarvodaya becomes aware that whatever he or she does has its bearing on the entire world. People learn that they matter and that what they do affects the lives of others. Therefore, they become more restrained in their cravings, and try to minimise them so that others will not be injured or deprived.

The Sarvodaya Movement, to bring about the Awakening of all (Sarvodaya) by sharing one's efforts and resources (Shramadana) has, as its foremost objective, the self-transformation of the participant. For Sarvodaya, development begins with the human personality itself. Personality awakening is at the centre of all activities launched in the name of development.

This is the exact opposite of possessive individualism that appears to be at the centre of western materialistic development which is promoted vigorously the world over under the patronage of the IMF and the World Bank. Sarvodaya believes and has proved in practice that a balanced and sustained development is possible for all where both material and spiritual progress can be achieved.

## **Organisational Development**

The initial impetus given to the study-service Sarvodaya Shramadana camps by students and teachers was taken up by the villagers themselves in hundreds of villages across the country. After the first shramadana camps they formed themselves into children's groups, mothers' groups, youth groups, farmers' groups, elders' groups and so on, all these directed to improve their quality of life primarily by their own efforts.

These groups after some time organised themselves into village level Sarvodaya Shramadana Societies. Their principal objectives were:

- 1   Awakening of Human Personality,
- 2   Awakening of the Family Unit, and
- 3   Awakening of the village community by taking steps to satisfy their basic human needs.

Then basic human needs were identified which were sub-divided into several hundred sub-needs. These were pertaining to:

- 1   environment,
- 2   water,
- 3   clothing,
- 4   food,
- 5   housing,
- 6   health,
- 7   energy,
- 8   communication,
- 9   education, and
- 10  spiritual and cultural needs.

Today these village level societies are co-ordinated by a Sarvodaya Divisional Centre. Generally about 25 - 30 villages come under each such centre. Ten to fifteen such divisions are co-ordinated at the district level by a District Centre. Thirty District Centres are co-ordinated by a National Headquarters. This is how over 8,000 Sarvodaya villages are networked today. Each village society is developed into an independent legal entity registered under the law of the land with the Registrar of Societies. The national level organisations known as the Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya is incorporated under Act of Parliament.

A salient feature of the Sarvodaya village awakening process is the emphasis it gives to the discovery, training, placement and upgrading of leaders from the villages themselves. This is done firstly in Shramadana Training Camps, secondly in Sarvodaya Development Education Institutions such as the Sarvodaya Management Training Institutes. These leaders are trained and sent back to their villages. The training is both in community leadership and technical skills.

### **A New Social Order**

To Sarvodaya "*Development*" is ideally and essentially an awakening process of individuals, families, communities (both urban and rural), the nation and the world at large. Development has six major dimensions, namely, spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political. There should be a balanced development along all these dimensions occurring simultaneously though at a particular point of time one or more of the dimensions may receive emphasis.

The development of the human personality is conceived as a multidimensional construction which includes spiritual, moral and cultural values among others. It is within this framework that human resources development capable of meeting basic human needs is carried out within Sarvodaya. The human personality cannot develop in a vacuum. Individuals need the support of the family, peers and the community. The community also needs the support of the larger community and the nation and indeed of the global community. In fact a truly sustainable people-based rural



development is unthinkable under repressive political conditions where fundamental rights of citizens are violated, freedom of the media is muzzled, unjust laws are imposed, the judiciary is interfered with and the natural resources and bio-systems which were traditionally under community control are dispossessed.

This means any attempt to bring about sustainable rural development should also have a broader protective dimension to prevent any intrusions into the democratic rights of the people in their struggle to awaken to their highest potential. The Sarvodaya mission is to create a new social order.

More precisely Sarvodaya is dedicated to the creation and sustaining at village level and nationally of a society whose value system is based on truth, non-violence and self-denial, and which is governed by ideals of a participatory democracy where decentralisation of power and resources, upholding basic human rights, satisfaction of basic human needs and tolerance of cultural, religious and linguistic differences is given pride of place, and which moves towards the economic concept of a no-poverty, no affluence society based on the sharing of resources.

An essential step in the creation of a new social order is the establishment and strengthening of relatively large numbers of rural and urban community organisations subscribing to the Sarvodaya development philosophy, acquiring a better understanding of the multiple forces and circumstances which inhibit their development efforts and gaining an increasing confidence and developing skills to act effectively on their own behalf.

### **A Five Stage Model**

Based on its extensive field experience Sarvodaya has postulated a five-stage model of village community development. These stages, one leading to the other are-

- 1 Building psycho-social infrastructures as a foundation for subsequent integrated village development,
- 2 Establishment of various supportive functional groups such as mothers, farmers, elders, youth and children,

- 3 Establishment of village-level registered Sarvodaya Shramadana Societies and initiating economic and infrastructural development programmes,
- 4 Strengthening the communities' self-support capacity through income generation and community financing thereby ensuring cost recovery for externally derived technical services,
- 5 Achievement of village financial independence and the spread of inter-village support.

These stages have been worked out in detail and appropriate village level, divisional level, district level and national level structures and systems have also been devised. It may be appropriate here to give a brief description of each of these stages.

### **First stage**

This represents the initial stage where the community is still very loosely knit, there are no organisations to represent the community as a whole, the community lacks a sense of direction, there is disunity and egoism.

The initial self-help work inspired and supported by the organisational structures of Sarvodaya is to bring the community together, to give them an idea that collectively they are a considerable resource as well as a power. This self-help work is referred to as building the psycho-social infrastructure necessary for the subsequent stages.

### **Second stage**

During this stage functional groups emerge in the community. They are the Children's Group, the Youth Group, the Mothers' Group, the Farmers' Group and the Elders' Group. It has been found that the Mothers' Group and the Children's Group are the most prevalent and most active. The Sarvodaya field workers interact with the Groups and development education courses are conducted at Sarvodaya field centres and special institutes for selected members of these Groups. The village child-care centre cum community kitchen generally arises during this stage.

### **Third stage**

The characteristic feature of this stage is the emergence of the village-level Sarvodaya Shramadana Society (SSS) which includes all the functioning Groups and its registration under the Societies Ordinance. This makes the village society a legal entity which can sue and be sued, hold properties, open a bank account and enter into formal contracts etc.

At this stage the Sarvodaya offers certain services which are contingent on a functioning registered society. The principle service is the initiation of economic activities starting with savings and credit schemes. The office-bearers are provided with management training to run these savings and credit schemes. Another service which starts with this stage is the technological support to the village communities to improve their water supply and sanitation. The support consists of the services of professionals at village level and the supply of material not available in the village, as for example cement.

It is expected that the activities and programmes started during the earlier stages will continue but with lesser inputs from the LJSSS.

### **Fourth Stage**

This stage is characterised by the starting of economic activities under the aegis of the village Sarvodaya Society. Loans for economic activities are given to be managed by the societies. Technical advice on economic activities is also given. This stage is characterised by the increasing ability of the society to meet the costs of the various community programmes and activities on its own.

The Sarvodaya will continue to provide technological services but the village is expected to bear an increasing portion of the cost.

### **Fifth Stage**

This stage is characterised by the ability of the village not only to meet the costs of its own services but be able to help other villages financially as well as co-operate with adjacent villages in bigger mutually beneficial tasks.

## **Integrated principal programmes**

To enable the village communities to develop along these five stages there are principle programmes that operate from the national headquarters up to the divisional level. They then reach the village in a co-ordinated and integrated way. In addition to these programmes several independent national Sarvodaya organisations have been organised to assist special groups and sectors which need support. About 4,000 full-time paid workers, 5000 full-time volunteers and more than 50,000 affiliated persons are part of this gigantic and integrated effort.

The Poverty Eradication and Empowerment of the Poor (PEEP) programme is one such programme. It is the responsibility of the PEEP Chief Executive and her staff at the district and divisional levels to initiate activities designed to promote collective action at the village level such as Shramadana Camps to meet basic human needs, family gatherings which provide a forum for the community to meet as a whole, formation of community interest groups and formation of village societies. They also enable trained field staff to visit villages for these purposes and also to train village level leadership in Sarvodaya Centres and Development Education Institutes. PEEP is active mostly in the first three stages in the development of a village.

The Early Childhood Development (ECDP) Programme mostly concentrates on the stages two and three in a village. The primary group itself is the children and mothers. They assist the Mothers' Groups to organise village Child Development Centres to promote nutrition, health and psycho-social development of children. It helps to update the knowledge and skills of mothers in relation to nutrition and health and special care of pregnant and lactating mothers.

The necessary pre-school teachers, health care workers, nutritionists and other related skilled workers are trained through this programme and courses conducted in the villages themselves as well as in Sarvodaya Centres and Development Education Institutes.

The Sarvodaya Rural Technical Services (SRTS) programme works mainly in villages at stages 3,4 and 5. It provides technical services and financial assistance to village societies in relation to meeting their basic needs primarily with respect to water supply, sanitation, transport, energy requirements, housing and other activities where technical knowledge and expertise is required. They train village level workers through special courses in planning, implementation, maintenance and monitoring of village level technical activities. Appropriate Technology with environmental care and the use of renewable resources are given special attention in this programme.

The Rural Enterprises Programme (REP) has as its mission "to make a sustainable development in the income of poorer members of village societies and enable the village societies to fund Sarvodaya village based development activities." Villages are selected to the REP programme when they reach the 3rd stage. Surveys on poverty carried out by PEEP are used to identify the poorer families needing support. Before commencing REP activities the village societies are streamlined and training is provided to those who give the necessary leadership for village level savings and credit schemes and the management of rural enterprise programmes. Managing village level economic activities within the village societies and finally handing over the entire responsibility to the village constitute the major work under this programme.

The Management Training Institute (MTI) which has branches in three provinces trains the office-bearers of societies, Executive Council Members and village special committee leaders. The primary credit approval is vested with the special group and village economic special committee. The village societies are trained and prepared to implement economic activities including pre-checking and post-checking group efforts and recommending any scheduling and action against defaulters.

There is also a Rural Enterprise Development Services Programme (REDS) which provides technical support to REP in agriculture, business development and product development areas. This is an essential support service for REP borrowers. REDS also attempts to increase the diversity of the REP with successful income generating activities.



It is well-known that our country has been going through violent social upheavals for over two decades. In the Southern part of the country a rebellion by youth and in the North and East of the country a civil war have de-stabilised the growth in economic and social development of the people. The Sarvodaya Movement plays a significant role in bringing about peace and harmony on one hand and relief and rehabilitation for the victims of the disturbances on the other. There is a special programme known as the Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Re-awakening (5R) functioning in the same way as other programmes under a Chief Executive.

To facilitate the participation of the general community leadership including the government officials concerned and other NGOs working in different areas, what is known as the Sarvodaya Elders' Action Committee (EAC) Programme has been launched. This programme both helps the development efforts of individual villages and supports collective action by several villages in projects which are mutually beneficial. EAC also undertakes mass education activities with respect to selected issues and carries out mass participatory activities such as peace marches and large scale shramadana camps.

In addition to these programmes whose responsibility totally rests with the main Sarvodaya Organisation, there are several independent national Sarvodaya organisations looking after special needs of the people. For example the Sarvodaya Suwasetha Sewa Society carries out all the social welfare activities for malnourished children, disabled men and women, destitute children and also manages community-based rehabilitation programmes for the physically disabled and the blind in selected districts. It also undertakes relief and rehabilitation work resulting from man-made disasters as well as natural disasters such as floods.

The Sarvodaya Women's Movement is another independent organisation attempting to upgrade the role of women in all aspects and at all levels of the Sarvodaya Movement. They are also in charge of carrying out quite a large environmental programme with the special involvement of women.

The Sarvodaya Samodaya Services is another independent society working in the area of prevention of drug abuse and rehabilitation of drug addicts and ex-convicts.

The Sarvodaya Legal Aid Services provides free legal aid to low income groups to settle their disputes and win their legal rights whenever they are trampled upon by the authority of powerful people.

The Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena or Peace Brigade is a voluntary independent organisation with over 80,000 young volunteers who render first aid at religious festivals, cultural events, disasters and also assist the sick by hospital visits, encourage them in putting up health-care centres in villages and in environmental conservation.

The Sarvodaya Shramadana International is a special unit of the organisation which deals with foreign volunteers, students, scholars and others to realise the objective of world awakening.

A vast programme of this type inevitably has a host of problems created by lack of funds, trained personnel and non-co-operation and sometimes repression by macro planners and implementors.

### **Development failures**

As the organisation expanded and a variety of specialised technically qualified personnel were needed it became necessary to recruit them from outside most often at competitive salaries. This created a number of ideological and internal staff problems some of which are yet to be satisfactorily solved. To a great extent these recruitments were donor-driven. But the donors cannot be blamed as they themselves could not comprehend the kind of management that Sarvodaya was developing. This problem was particularly created in the economic sector where the Sarvodaya need-based approach was different from the classical profit-based capitalist approach to development.

As long as governments are dependent on foreign aid for their national development activities so will the people's development organisations. If both the governments and their aid givers are

genuine they should admit that their development strategies for the last four decades have not benefited the poorest in the world; nor were they environmentally friendly. A change in attitude on their part to allow and even support innovative people's effort is yet to be seen. At the moment what they are looking for seems to be so-called non-governmental organisations which are in every respect similar to governmental bureaucracies and private sector technocracies and manned very often by retired public servants. On the other hand, indigenous organisations such as Sarvodaya are not appreciated by them for they challenge the status quo and highlight the falsity and the hypocrisy in this whole system of top-down development.

### **Contemporary situation**

Starting from the individual, the family and the village community awakening, by 1989 Sarvodaya had reached a certain critical mass of people's participation which would have enabled it to embark upon a national awakening programme of far reaching positive consequence on the people of Sri Lanka. It was at this time that the government of Sri Lanka launched an all-out attack on the Sarvodaya Movement and all those connected with it.

For 4 1/2 years this Movement and its organisation structures and even personnel were continuously harassed by the government. These harassments came in various devious ways. For example, our legitimate right to participate as partners in the World Bank-sponsored Poverty Eradication Programme has been denied so far. A vast children's home-gardening and savings programme which had a membership of over 200,000 children between the ages 7 and 16 had to be abandoned due to an order by the Central Bank which said that this scheme was violating a Finance Companies Act. Sarvodaya's access to banks for credit and other facilities were denied by "orders from above". Government officers who were very keenly participating in the Sarvodaya programmes were prevented from co-operating with Sarvodaya, again on verbal orders from above.

A Presidential Commission to investigate non-governmental organisations was appointed in 1991. This Commission is

continuing up to this day and in their quest for "fact finding" they have been a constant harassment to Sarvodaya activities. Up to the writing of this paper they have employed teams of investigators mostly from the Criminal Investigating Department to look into the affairs of NGOs. It is common knowledge that this investigation was specially a witch-hunt on Sarvodaya. (Fortunately, all this ended in 1993)

Sarvodaya has never dabbled in power and party politics. On the contrary it has developed a critical mass in the country where it has certainly become a spiritual and physical people's development force. The entire process has been on the lines that the Colorado Conference is going to contemplate on Village Based Sustainable Development. That is why it is extremely important that the Conference discuss how best this kind of confrontational attitude by governments and bureaucracies can be dealt with without getting entrapped into power politics or violence.

As far as Sarvodaya is concerned we decided upon a five fold strategy to meet this confrontation without giving up our principles and without participating in political power struggles. The first of this five-fold approach was an exercise in patience and continuation of programmes to the best of our ability within these constraints.

Second, an aggressive awareness-creating programme for the general public to educate them as to the dangers of the environmentally harmful, socially disastrous and economically violent macro-development projects presently promoted.

Thirdly, taking the authorities concerned before courts of law for violating our fundamental freedom to associate and work for the benefit of our people within the law.

Fourthly, direct mass action programmes involving tens of thousands of people protesting against environmentally harmful projects.

Lastly, uniting all the democratic forces of the country against repression and trying to win freedom under just laws.

The past 4 1/2 years have challenged us and enabled us to test the validity of our approach, forcing us to reflect on and re-discover new paths of social transformation under repressive conditions. We now find that this period has made us stronger and more committed to the validity of our principles of truth, non-violence and self-denial. The worst of this period of attacks on Sarvodaya appear to have ended a few weeks ago with the unfortunate death of the Executive President of the country, who seems to have been spearheading the attacks on Sarvodaya. His successor is a person who is well disposed towards the Sarvodaya Movement and we are expecting him to undo the damage done in the past by these harassments and bring Sarvodaya back into the mainstream of national development with the government. We are not relaxing but are determined to survive and continue to do the work we set out to do, so that the individual, the family and the village, nation, and the world community can awaken to their highest potential for sustainable development, peace and justice.

---

*Talk delivered by Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne at Colorado State University  
Department of Civil Engineering, USA on September 1993.*



## **TOLERANCE AS A POSITIVE CHARACTERISTIC FOR PERSONAL AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE**

I propose first to deal with the subject of Tolerance from the Buddhist point of view with which I am most familiar. Then I will attempt to capture the ethos of the Asian peoples as a whole and draw certain general conclusions pertaining to Asian Perspectives for the Future. I go on the presumption that Tolerance can be used as a positive characteristic to bring about personal and structural changes in societies leading to peace and progress of all nations. The spiritual, moral, cultural social, economic and political dimensions of Tolerance will be considered in this presentation with a view to understand the interrelatedness of the present day realities of our world.

### **Tolerance - Personal and Structural**

Tolerance is not only refraining from prohibition and persecution. It is a positive state of mind that accepts the right of every living thing to exist without wilful hindrances from others. It is not inaction as some have defined it. In a Buddhist sense it means understanding and sympathy. Figuratively it could be described as love that emanates from the heart of a mother towards her only child. This should be the ideal level of tolerance that we as members of this little planet Earth, should treasure in our hearts towards all living things beginning from human beings, animals and birds extending even to trees and plants.

We are living in a highly complex, competitive and structured society where personal attributes of citizens alone will not be the determining factor pertaining to peace and unhindered development of our communities. People's minds are not only conditioned by certain social prejudices based on caste, creed, class and so on. We also have the unfortunate situation of these differences being institutionalised in different forms. When it comes to political and economic formations, institutionalisation of these prejudices has also taken place within the incorporated laws of the country. These structures would certainly not be the best for our countries. Therefore the subject of Tolerance has to be dealt with not only from the perspective of the psychological nature of human personality but also with an insight into social, economic and political structures in our societies, which influence it.

When we study the subject of violence we consider both personal violence and structural violence. In the same manner we could look into personal intolerance and structural intolerance from an Asian perspective. Therefore, in looking into the future we have to deal with the problem of influencing the human personality to acquire increasingly greater levels of tolerance in dealing with other fellow human beings. We also have to attempt to bring about changes in our accepted social, economic and political structures in a way that the latter contributes towards facilitating greater interpersonal tolerance and harmony.

## **Respect for Life**

In the famous Karaniya Metta Sutta or the Discourse on Loving Kindness Lord Buddha exhorts every human being to cultivate in his or her mind respect for all sentient beings. He goes to the extent of describing all forms of life ranging from a single cell living being to all living things of all sizes, levels of evolution and growth. They should all be given equal compassion. The compassion we extend should be total and absolute. It is only this respect for life or loving kindness (metta) that can lay the foundation for a human being to cut short and completely escape from the cycle of births and deaths (samsara) which bring about all suffering and unhappiness. In other words there was a spiritual objective. There was a supreme goal of eternal happiness to strive for. Loving kindness was the foundation from which it had to be successfully pursued.

Loving kindness (Metta) leads to compassionate action (Karuna) towards other beings. It develops dispassionate joy (Muditha) in the human minds. These values of metta, karuna and muditha help a human being to develop equanimity (upekka) which enables him to face any challenge which affects him positively or negatively with an equal sense of detachment. These four characteristics are called Brahma Viharas or the Abodes of the Brahmas.

In the Ratana Sutta Lord Buddha stresses the importance of actions of human beings that affect the environment and everything within the earth, the atmosphere and the stratosphere. He emphasises the harmony that should prevail between human

society and nature. Therefore, not only inter-personal relationships, but also the relationships pertaining to the environment are taken into full consideration in His philosophy.

### **A Supreme Ideal and Highest Toleration**

Personal tolerance is an integral part of a total process leading to unconditioned and eternal happiness. In the case of a Buddhist cultivation and fulfillment of ten perfections (Paramitas) leads to Enlightenment. Those who have taken to this path practice Tolerance as a part of the ten Paramitas, namely, Beneficence, Morality, Renunciation, Wisdom, Effort, Patience and Tolerance, Truth, Determination, Compassion and Equanimity. About five hundred and fifty stories of previous births of the Buddha related by Him to His disciples and represented in our tradition, illustrate the struggle He went through in His past lives. He cultivated these perfections as He sojourned from birth to birth until His last birth and final Supreme Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree in Bodhgaya 2539 years ago.

One example is the story of an ascetic known as Shantiwadi in the book of Jataka Stories (Jataka III.30ff). There is a vivid description of how he practised tolerance and ideal compassion even towards the king who tortured him. The king could not believe that the ascetic would undergo all the cruelties imposed upon him without any illwill towards the king.

In this story, overcome by anger the king subjects the ascetic to various forms of cruelties. Each step of cruelty increases until one by one the ascetic's two hands and legs are severed from the body.

The king after each cruel step questions the ascetic: "Do you still harbour thoughts of compassion towards me?"

The ascetic replies in the affirmative.

The king orders him to be killed. The ascetic replies "Although I die I carry no illwill towards you. My mind is full of compassion towards you".

This indeed is toleration at the highest level. The ascetic had an ideal to strive for far beyond his present mundane existence. He wanted supreme happiness to be attained in the form of spiritual enlightenment. Because of this supreme and sublime ideal, a state of mind par excellence, he could tolerate any cruelty imposed upon him. In the context of the present day world many of us have a sublime ideal such as Moksha, Nirvana or Heaven which is only a distant concept. But all the while we struggle to make the best out of the present competitive existence being gravely intolerant of one another.

### **Tolerance with Understanding**

There is another interesting episode in the life of the Buddha. This example shows the various stages through which this ideal is reached. A monk by the name of Punna (Majjhima Nikaya III .267 66) requests the Buddha's permission to visit an area known as Sunaparanta where the people are believed to be very cruel and bereft of tolerance. The Buddha wanted to test the monk to see whether he had the courage, determination and the right kind of tolerance to go to that community and practice his meditation.

The Buddha asked him , "Punna, the people at Sunaparanta are said to be very cruel . They will treat you with harsh words. What are you going to do?"

Punna replied, " I do not mind them using harsh words so long as they do not physically harm me."

"If they happen to attack you physically what would you do?"

He said, "I consider it a virtue in them not to attack me with stones and such material."

"What if they attack you with stones and such material?"

"It is indeed a virtue in them not to attack me with sticks".

"If they attack you with sticks?"

"I consider it a virtue in them not to attack me with weapons".

“Supposing weapons are used?”

“They will attack me with weapons. Certainly they will not kill me. I am happy because of that”.

“If they happen to attack you with weapons and kill you?”

“Some people being disgusted of life seek others help to get themselves killed. In this case I have such ones to kill me without troubling myself to search for them. I shall be happy on this account.”

Lord Buddha was very pleased and permitted him to proceed to Sunaparanta village and live.

Tolerance here is placed in a context which depicts its gradual development from stage to stage. An individual should adjust himself to tolerate others in every context of life. It is the understanding of the other person and the positive response to whatever the other person is doing that matters. It implies positive action on various stages leading to settlement of conflict. We may not be able to develop it to the ideal state at once. It is difficult to practice but in human life with all our limitations we may be able to adapt ourselves to fit into a intermediate stage in which we could contribute to conflict resolution at least to a certain extent.

Tolerance in Buddhist sense means understanding the context in which one is placed and developing a positive state of action which will not further precipitate the condition at hand.

From the utterances of the Buddha the following would vividly illustrate Buddhist attitude towards intolerance.

“He who has understanding and great wisdom does not think of harming himself or another, nor of harming both alike. He rather than think of his own welfare, thinks of that of others, of that of both, and of the welfare of the whole world. In that way one shows understanding and great wisdom.” (Anguttara Nikaya Gradual Sayings, 4, No.186.)



“By protecting oneself (e.g. morally ) one protects others, by protecting others, one protects oneself” (Samyutta Nikaya, Kindred Sayings, 47, No.19)

## Religious Tolerance

India had the great King Asoka in whom tolerance is symbolised. His tolerance extended not only to human beings but also to animals and the natural environment in which one lived. Asoka Rock Edict VII advises the people “that followers of all religions should live in unity and harmony. Their intellectual levels may be high or low. What they desire may be high or low. Yet all of them are expected to honour discipline and adhere to principles of righteousness completely or partially - He blesses those who live in tolerance”. The Emperor Asoka’s Rock Edict VII is one of the most striking injunctions issued on religious tolerance. His subjects are enjoined “Not to deprecate other religions”, but on the contrary to suitably honour them and to help people belonging to other religions.

The way that Asoka, being an emperor, established a socio-political structure for the supreme well-being of his subjects is observed in his famous Dhauli Inscription. “All men are my children, and just as I desire for my children that they should obtain welfare and happiness, both in this world and the next, so do for all men”.

This philosophy enabled the king put into practice a tolerance that enabled the people to satisfy their basic needs and apply the same tolerance into their own life. This is seen as the social welfare system he established through which medical centres was made available not only for human beings but also for animals. Roads were constructed, wells supplied for water and shady trees grown on either side of the road. Plants and medicinal herbs were also grown. The importance of good communication was realised by king Asoka. All those facilitated a tolerance that was translated into practical actions meaningful to the people.

In the field of religious tolerance today in our world we have to understand and appreciate other people’s beliefs and learn to live with them. The Buddha was once visited by a nobleman who

after his discussions with the Buddha wanted to follow the Buddha's way. Here the Buddha advised him as to how his conduct should be towards his own religion which he was now going to give up . The nobleman was asked to continue all the support he extended to his former religious mentors. In no way should he reduce this support. Such an attitude paves the way for practicing tolerance even when one's beliefs are different from those of others.

### **Three Integrated Levels**

In a philosophy of tolerance applicable to modern times there should be the following important aspects.

1. Tolerance towards one's own self. Without this tolerance no basis for tolerating others could be established. It begins with compassion towards oneself. This can be cultivated by abstaining from all evil, cultivating good and purifying one's mind. Human beings should cultivate mindfulness in daily living.
2. Tolerance in the family. Here the tolerance is based on understanding and appreciation. Each member of the family understands one's duties and responsibilities. They perform such duties with understanding and affection. The discipline in the institution of family is based on tolerance.
3. Tolerance among small groups. Those consist of three main small groups (1) The groups other than the own family with whom one lives ( i.e. in the neighbourhood), (2) The groups whom one comes into physical contact while involving in day to day work (Village Community, work place ), (3) The groups one comes into contact not physically but through other means. In the society there are small and large groups with whom we come into contact by means other than physical. Toleration exercised towards all in a reciprocal basis is the best toleration we could think of.

### **Non-revengefulness**

The Dhammapada (1.5) says that hatred never ceases by hatred. It only ceases when love is practiced. The story that is

often related to illustrate this principle refers to a prince whose father and mother were put to death by an enemy king. The young prince determined to take revenge finally became a close confidante of the enemy king. But when he finally got the opportunity to take his revenge, remembering his father's advice, not to be revengeful, he gave it up. The moral of this story illustrates the value of tolerance. Without tolerance, hatred and revenge find a fertile climate to grow and destroy not only oneself but also others.

### **Limits to Tolerance**

Is there a limit to tolerance? This depends on the context. Once a cobra was so compassionate and tolerant of others that even women having no fear about him utilised him as a rope to bind their firewood. A hermit on observing how this limitless tolerance was creating endless trouble to the cobra advised him thus "If you are a cobra, you need not bite these people in anger. But at least raise your hood and make a hissing sound so that they may know that you are a cobra. They then will not unduly harass you." The cobra followed the advice and while maintaining his tolerance avoided physical embarrassment to himself.

There was the case of two Buddhist monks walking on the road every day being insulted and harassed by a wicked man. One monk was tolerant to the utmost. The other monk was also tolerant. After attempting to find reason with the wicked man, one day he kept his robe aside and dealt him seriously. Thereafter the wicked man did not come to interfere with the monks. The second monk had found the basis for practical tolerance in this context. Indeed self-defence systems such as judo, karate etc. were supposed to have been developed by monks who crossed from India to China and Japan through dacoit infested mountain ranges.

The third example is from the Buddha's life. When the Buddha visited the dwelling of a famous non-human being, that being ordered the Buddha to get up from his seat and go out and come in. The Buddha followed this command three times. But knowing that this non-human being was intent on ordering him to go out and come in, in order to tire him out, finally refused it. The

Buddha thereupon met the non-human being's challenge face to face.

Tolerance in human life should thus be realistic. It should depend very much on the particular context in which one is placed. One should thus possess a correct understanding of the situation to determine, when, where and how tolerance should end and other forms of correction (i.e. selective power) should be applied.

### **Training for Human Response Development**

In our present society the importance that is given to enrich spiritual life through various kinds of education and training is very much less compared to the importance attached to what is called human resource development. Generally what is understood by human resource development is how best a human being can be trained to acquire various skills in economic production processes. Undoubtedly this is very important. If a human being is not made aware of how his mind should deal with the challenges around him by responding correctly to the numerous sensory stimuli he gets from the environment, all other forms of training will be counter-productive. Tolerance is not possible without a penetrating and perceptive mind which can grasp a situation and then respond without allowing one's greed and illwill to manifest themselves as a reaction. This is where, right from childhood, spiritual values and goals should play a vital role in human personality development.

When spiritual value systems deteriorate and people commit anti-social acts, societies formulate laws coupled with various forms of punishments. If the implementers of law, justice and punishment are ideal human personalities, then certainly, these will serve a useful purpose. However, when the society as a whole becomes generally greedy or power oriented, then very serious lapses in the administration of justice occur. On the other hand as we know very well, the ideal state cannot be achieved if society as a whole does not attempt to follow accepted norms, practice the ideals, and wrong doers are not brought to book. This brings us to the need for economic and political structures to be founded on the high cultural and spiritual principles of our respective societies.



## Politics of Tolerance

The meaning of the word tolerance is defined in the dictionary as the disposition to be patient and fair towards those whose opinions or practices differ from one's own. History shows that the Sri Lankan polity has experienced varying degrees of tolerance during half a millennium of western foreign domination. Similar experiences of other nations which were under foreign rulers can also be cited.

During the 16th century when the Portuguese ruled the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka the Sinhala kings tried their best to oppose the Portuguese and drive them out. But the military strength of the opponents was far too great for the rulers of the island to fight with confidence of victory. The Portuguese political power was coupled with religious fanaticism and they persecuted the Sinhala people in the maritime provinces with great cruelty. Powerless to oppose, the victims adopted the strategy of tolerance with submission. As preservation of life was most important they submitted themselves to baptism and conversion, not with conviction but with strategic tolerance. They chose the lesser evil of conversion to the greater evil of taking human life. Their strategy was to tolerate the lesser evil.

The successive waves of foreign invasion by the Dutch and the British taught the ruling elites tolerance of a different kind. Foreign domination was tolerated with a mature sense of patient wisdom. The people were anxious to preserve their religious and cultural traditions and at the same time they realised that foreign power was far too strong to be opposed successfully. Further the local people may have also realised the long term benefits brought by foreign rule such as construction of roads and international trade facilities.

The better ideal of tolerance can be achieved with mutual understanding and appreciation. This is the type of prudent political tolerance advocated by King Asoka. Religious rivalry could have been a divisive force in the Asokan empire. Asoka established his political power through military might and earned the name Chandasoka. Once converted to Buddhism his heart underwent such profound transformation that he eschewed



violence and expressed his profound grief over the bloodshed he had caused. To secure peace in the empire and win the hearts of his subjects he advocated a spirit of tolerance which is admirable even today after more than 20 centuries. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his book, *The Discovery of India*, says "Ashoka's pillars of stone with their inscriptions would speak to me in their magnificent language and tell me of a man, though an emperor, was greater than any king or emperor".

A modern manifestation of religious tolerance can be cited from Thailand. In the collected articles of Prince Dharni Nivat Kromamna Bidayalabh Brdihyakorn there is a statement about the King of Siam. It states: "The sovereign is, in fact, nothing more than the 'Upholder of Religion', which includes any faith professed by his subjects. The title is, of course, broader than the Western 'Defender of the faith', for a Buddhist monarch must be tolerant like every good Buddhist. Moreover, the traditional 'King of Righteousness' is expected to encourage any moral code that would benefit his subjects. Hence, the sovereign not only tolerates but also gives material support to Hinduism, Islam and Christianity without discrimination".

In Islam the Holy Qur'an says that all wrong done against anyone is to be considered as wrong done against oneself (2.231;11.101). God gives whatever that is in the world to good people. Final judgement will be made not only based on individual performance but also after weighing the deeds of all adult and responsible human beings. Tolerance is inherent in an attitude of this type which emphasises responsibility in all, not only Islam, but also in Buddhism and Christianity. This is a vital characteristic to have in whatever education or socialisation the society imparts to others.

### **Higher Education**

Both education and higher education aim at promoting peace with understanding. Comparative religion, psychology, anthropology and sociology are subjects taught in universities today to train the intelligentsia to live in harmony in a world community that is shrinking daily through modern communication. Religious and ethnic plurality has to be

understood and appreciated for the benefit of all. Ethical codes are common to all religions and they can be highlighted to foster peace among adherents. Ultimate ideals such as God and Nibbana could be redefined in line with modern experience without distorting scriptural foundations and without causing religious rivalry. God can be defined as the embodiment of all that is good and wise, or the personification of goodness and wisdom. Within human beings too goodness and wisdom are found in varying degrees and when the human being cultivates all goodness and wisdom eschewing greed, hatred and delusion the spiritual aim is realised. Theistic religions say that such a person attains companionship with God, or absorption like a drop in the mighty ocean, the non-theistic Buddhists say he attains Nibbana. The greatness in adherents of such diverse beliefs lie in their ability to understand, tolerate and appreciate each other.

### **UN's Role**

The United Nations as the world body closest to those ideals, should also give equal importance to dissemination of spiritual principles and practical illustrations to inspire and educate the world community as a whole. The UN can, as recommended by the International Commission on Peace and Food, establish an International Centre jointly operated by the UN Security Council and UNESCO to implement peace building programmes. "Peace-building activities should be expanded to address security threats issuing from environmental degradation, poverty, migration of population and refugees".

### **Gandhian Method**

Today atrocities committed in a spirit of extreme intolerance are publicised through the media resulting in inactive mental attitudes being created towards intolerance.

Mahatma Gandhi during his struggle for freedom embodied in his words and deeds an admirable tolerance towards his opponents. Whether it was personal violence or structural violence the principles of tolerance he adhered to were never compromised. In the same token he developed the instrument of Satyagraha as his weapon against intolerance without incurring any injustice or harm to those who perpetrated such injustices and yet they were

made to realise that they were wrong. Be it in a situation where a few people were involved or a situation where a social injustice or state repression was involved he applied the device of Satyagraha.

Mahatma Gandhi's approach to non-violence also contains a very valuable insight that will help us to better understand the tolerance I am trying to advocate. The Mahatma opposed coercion and violence because we, who do not know the full truth, have no right to force another. So earlier on if I talked about tolerance based on a profound sense of respect for the other, I am now talking about a tolerance that is based on a profound sense of humility.

When we turn the searchlight within we will realise that we are still, to a large extent, groping our way through life. It is indeed amazing, and disconcerting, that the older we get the more we realise how we have merely exchanged one set of problems for another. There are no definite answers to life's challenges. Life is a process and we are all learners. There are also many paths to the truth and we respect the paths of others. This understanding reinforces our sense of toleration.

All human beings in a community may not be expected realistically to reach the courageous moral heights of the Mahatma to fight against intolerance using Satyagraha as the only weapon. Under these circumstances the law makers of a country should incorporate within legal structures certain norms pertaining to legal remedies an ordinary citizen or a group could resort to under such intolerable conditions. The force of the state should be utilised in circumstances like this.

### **Modern Reality**

In modern Asian and African countries states have been founded on western models without taking into account the spiritual and cultural evolution of Asian and African societies. Consequently ideological or clan wars and violent struggles for power have become common. Numerous incidents of genocide occur almost on a daily basis. With modern weaponry at the disposal of contending parties the mass destruction that occurs to human life and property are of a very high order. Even in these instances we should not forget the importance of influencing the

personalities in positions of leadership to follow courses of action without violating values based on non-greed, non-illwill and non-ignorance.

Political tensions and demands for separate states are common in the region. Civil war in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka, Kashmiri conflict in India, suppression of democracy in Burma, the East-Timor issue in Indonesia, the Mindanao problem in Philippines, the religious intolerance reported from Bangladesh, the continuance of tension in Cambodia are places where human beings tend to be intolerant towards other human beings.

Rapid changes in the economic sector such as structural adjustments, debt issues and desperate attempts to achieve NIC status have also caused a great deal of tension among people leading to all kinds of injustices and intolerance. Massive violations of human rights, large scale continuing environmental disasters to water, soil and air systems, disruption of age-old agricultural systems, could also add to the human problems.

In this context I may quote from a German publication entitled "Third World and Western Civilisation".

The current economic gap between the countries of the Third World and Western civilisation must not only be reduced in order to overcome poverty and hunger, but also in order to preserve culture plurality on earth. The political differences and tensions should be weakened and cultural differences strengthened, despite many tendencies to the contrary, for it is not an unified international society. But the continuous interplay between many different, equal and economically viable cultures represents the best pre-requisite for what people want above all - Peace. (Rudolf Wendorff, *Dritte Welt und Westliche Zivilisation*, Opladen, 1964, p.460).

These are issues that have to be addressed both at people's participatory levels and by governmental and intergovernmental organisations.

We also have to consider the nature of economic and political institutions that exist in our countries. Most of these have a hierarchical order where the top rungs in the structures do not have a close relationship with the bottom most majority in a society. Norms are set and the decisions are taken from the top



and the citizens are expected to obey and follow them. In an age where communication systems are highly developed this kind of pyramidal structure is no longer conducive to the cultivation of tolerance in inter-personal and inter-group relationships. We can dispense with such systems and adopt a Gandhian system of power originating from basic communities and extending in concentric circles to reach even universal proportions. To express it in a different way this is where the Asian spiritual-moral value systems and modern scientific communication technologies can be harmoniously combined.

In China we observe how the people were nurtured in a long tradition. The great Confucius stressed the importance of traditional virtues such as Filial Piety, Courage, Honesty, Loyalty, Kindness and the familiarity with rules of traditional polite behaviour and ceremonies.

In modern China some of the forms of the past are surprisingly resumed. Decentralisation for example, has brought about the reappearance of certain traditional forms of business and industrial practices. The village is recognised as a basic unit of society. Local village leadership is made the core of the socio-political structure. The Chinese have, in a masterly manner, accomplished the task of uniting power at the base with production: The lowest or basic level of the party organisation is attached to a unit of production, of territory, or of administration.

It is this unique structural adjustment that enables the Chinese to come exceedingly close to the modern world without creating the usual glaring gap that exists between the haves and the have-nots in many of our own countries. The structural adjustments provided the required leadership at the grassroot level whose voice is heard upstairs. Consequently tolerance breeds faster among people whose basic needs are satisfied and among whom a wide gap in quality of life does not exist.

The role of the United Nations is most important in not only giving substance to Asian perspectives of tolerance. First of all it needs to gather these experiences from different parts of Asia together and disseminate them in practical ways through its General Assembly and specialised agencies to the member States that embrace almost the entire human population at this time. While the maximum devolution of power and strong co-ordination



of these community based centres of power for peace, progress and justice are a possibility at national levels it is also of utmost importance to develop proper and effective instruments under the United Nations to deal forcibly in carefully selected situations where institutionalised intolerance prevails. To reach such a level the United Nations structure itself has to become more democratic and all nations big or small should have an equal voice in its formulation of policies, development of the required mechanism and implementation of action programmes.

Let's hope that the United Nations Year of Tolerance bring us closer to understanding these issues in our efforts to build a more tolerant and humane world society.

In a recently prepared manifesto by the Club of Budapest, the following statements are included in a call for planetary consciousness.

"In our world, static stability is an illusion. The only permanence is in sustainable change and transformation. There is a constant need to guide the evolution of our societies so as to avoid breakdowns and progress toward a world where all people can live in peace, freedom and dignity. Such guidance does not come from teachers and schools, not even from political and business leaders, though their commitment and role are important. Essentially and crucially, it comes from each person himself and herself. An individual endowed with planetary consciousness recognises his or her role in the evolutionary process and acts responsibly in light of this perception. Each of us must start with himself or herself to evolve his or her consciousness to this planetary dimension; only then can we become responsible and effective agents of our society's change and transformation".

"Planetary consciousness is the knowing as well as the feeling of the vital interdependence and essential oneness of humankind, and the conscious adoption of the ethics and the ethos that this entails. Its evolution is the new imperatives of human survival on this planet. The 21st century shall be a century of planetary consciousness, or it shall not be at all".

---

*(Lecture delivered at the Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting on  
1 - 4 May, 1995 in New Delhi.)*

## REACHING THE POOR - EXPERIENCE OF THE NGOS

I am thankful to the Hatton National Bank for inviting me to participate in the Symposium on "Banking with the Poor". The particular topic I have been asked to speak on is "Reaching the Poor - Experience of NGOS."

I do not propose to speak about Experience of NGOs in general as my knowledge and experience about them except Sarvodaya is very limited. I would concentrate mainly on the experience of Sarvodaya for the last 35 years in reaching the poor as I am conversant with it.

There are three main sectors in my opinion which are concerned with the poor and are trying to reach the poor. They are the governmental agencies, the private sector agencies and what are known as non-governmental organisations, which I prefer to call people's or social sector organisations. I have no doubt that all these three agencies can reach the poor employing different kinds of strategies they choose. It is not difficult to find even in extremely poor villages in Sri Lanka where plenty of nutritious and healthy drinks such as king coconuts and herbal teas are available urbanised drinks such as Fanta, Coca Cola, Sprite, and so on readily available for sale. The private sector has successfully reached the poor to change their healthy drinking and food habits. Some call this progress.

The question is why does anyone want to reach the poor? Is it to make profit by expanding markets, or retain or capture political power or impose on the poor the ideas that those who want to reach them consider to be important? Even with regard to banking with the poor we have to ask the question why do bankers want to reach the poor? Is it for increasing the bank's profits, or to do banking with a social responsibility so that both the interests of the poor and the bank are served in a just and harmonious way.

This is where the need for a philosophy on development, a code of ethics in politics, business or non-governmental social development work becomes important.

As far as the Sarvodaya Movement is concerned it has accepted a philosophical approach to the problem of dealing with the poor or even the rich. Both economic and spiritual wellbeing of people are accepted as important and inseparable. There should be a value-based outlook on all, whether they are at the giving end or the receiving end. Sarvodaya believes that both the giver and the receiver are two sides of the same coin and cannot be easily separated.

This is where the importance of the concept of sharing comes in; and sharing is a cardinal principle in truly civilised societies that the Sarvodaya Movement is trying to promote. That is why the Sarvodaya thought of Awakening of All starts with the action of Shramadana which means sharing one's time, thought, effort and resources with others so that a common bond is established which helps to awaken the personalities of all parties concerned. Cardinal principles of Truth, Non-violence and Self-denial are the ideals on which such actions are based.

When a politician, administrator, banker, businessman or an NGO worker reaches the poor it is not only the poor who should get benefited, but also the person trying to intervene in the latter's life. The enrichment of the personality of all concerned in the process of such interventions and interactions are most important for a sustainable society. Sarvodaya believes in a philosophical kind of approach even in what we consider to be very mundane and materialistic-oriented matters. The theory of Dependent Co-arising propounded by the Buddha is applicable not only to understand our Sansaric sojourn but also to correctly perceive all conditioned phenomena in nature, living world, human beings and society.

The situation of the poor in a country or in the world cannot be understood unless we relate their condition to those who are rich and affluent. Poverty has a direct relationship with affluence. Similarly, poverty and powerlessness are directly related to affluence and power. Unless this relationship is understood totally, the deterioration of both classes of people and the degeneration of society as a whole cannot be checked.

When we consider our country or the world in which the prime problems have gone beyond the distinctions of the poor and the rich, or the powerful and the powerless, we can realise how problems have become common and are adversely affecting the community as a whole. Environmental degradation, ecological imbalances, green house effects of industrialisation, the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, poisoning of water resources, soils, the seas and the air are taking place in proportions beyond reversal. Institutionalised violence like wars, economic exploitation, terrorism, drug addiction, prostitution, terminal diseases like AIDS are all inter-related when we look at these problems in depth.

This is why the Sarvodaya Movement believes that the problems pertaining to human beings or as a matter of fact the living world have to be tackled holistically. An integrated approach based on Truth, Non-violence and Self-denial has been developed by Sarvodaya for last 35 years. One of its greatest successes is the ease with which Sarvodaya can motivate, mobilise, organise, train and even institutionalise communities who have been considered unreachable. This sometimes is loosely called 'empowerment of the poor' though in fact it is empowerment of the individual, family and the small community for their own self-development based on self-reliance, community participation and systematic planning from bottom up.

Even the poorest of the poor will have within themselves certain spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and institutional resources. We make a beginning by trying to awaken their consciousness as to their own capacity for change. Harnessing of these human, material and non-material resources is a skill that has to be developed by all those who are desirous of reaching the poor with the intention of helping them to uplift themselves. Sarvodaya helps the communities to go through certain stages of development which can be very loosely described as psychological infrastructure building, social infrastructure building, institutional infrastructure building, skills development and economic institution building. Even though the emphasis on different activities in each of these stages in a time frame principle may vary, still, the whole process is an integrated one where one activity supplements the others.



The philosophical objective that is placed before the community as a whole and the poor in particular is that it is possible to build a no-poverty society which fulfills their interests and satisfies their needs. It may not be possible or desirable to plan for an affluent society. A no-poverty no-affluence society is one where age old religious and other traditions are preserved even though one can argue that these traditional values are a hindrance to economic development. We do not subscribe to that view as we utilised them as non-monetized assets within the reach and control of people. People have to achieve an optimum level of satisfaction of their basic human needs to bring about a no-poverty no-affluence society within their community. They are related to Environment, Water, Clothing, Food, Housing, Health Care, Communication, Energy, Education and Spiritual and Cultural Needs.

In the process of satisfying these basic needs while the existing skills are utilised, new skills are also acquired by the community. This is where the outside agencies can help the community in their own awakening process. Sarvodaya has organised numerous programmes to train people in skills to achieve these targets pertaining to basic human needs. When skills are acquired and utilised that leads to the creation of employment and income. That is why among the Ten Basic Human Needs we have not included employment or income. They are the results of trying to systematically activate the community to their own potential for upliftment. These in turn improve their quality of life.

The institutional structure that Sarvodaya has developed to help communities in this sector consists of a Management Training Institute (with branches in different parts of the country), Rural Enterprise Program and a Rural Enterprise Development Services Section. Together they come under SEEDS or Sarvodaya Economic enterprises Development Services. While these institutions and structures are co-ordinated at the national, and district levels, at divisional and village levels they are closely integrated with other Sarvodaya Programmes such as Poverty Eradication and Empowerment of the Poor Programme, Early Childhood Development Programme, Rural Technical Services Programme, Sarvodaya Women's Programme. Sarvodaya Forestry



and Agricultural Services Programme, Sarvodaya Peace Brigade, Sarvodaya Community Health Services and Sarvodaya Legal Aid Services.

Sarvodaya's Rural Enterprise Programme (REP) recognised the desperate need for low-cost small scale loans to be available in economically depressed villages. We believed in doing this as such credit would create immediate and substantial employment opportunities at a relatively small capital cost. We researched and sought the advice of other like-minded organisations and devised five objectives for the programme in consultation with village representatives. They are -

1. To encourage the savings habit in the village Sarvodaya societies.
2. To improve the money management capability of the society and its members.
3. To generate a sustainable increase in the income generated by existing businesses in the village.
4. To initiate new businesses in the villages.
5. To generate income for the society to cover costs of social development within the village.

These objectives illustrate again how closely interconnected are the savings and credit programme and the training programme. If REP was to succeed, then it needed the services of our Management Training Institute to prepare the development managers who can provide leadership in the drive towards economic upliftment. MTI's key objective was to identify and evaluate the business and management training needs of both the village Sarvodaya society and of the Sarvodaya infrastructure at Head Office, District and Divisional levels in order to deliver the most appropriate savings and credit system to the village.

It is appropriate at this stage to explain the broad structure of the REP followed by an outline of the type of loans we make to society members.

In brief, the spread of personnel in REP is highly decentralised. At Head Office there are only eight staff members, namely, the Programme Director, his Deputy, Chief Accountant,

Regional Supervisor, Accounts Clerk, two Administrative Assistants and a Secretary. Each of the 20 District Offices is operated by a District Project Manager supported by an Assistant Manager, Accountant, Accounts Clerk, Training Officer, Business Development Officer, Agricultural Development Officer and Secretary.

The Sarvodaya Provincial Co-ordinators and District Co-ordinators, who operate the Sarvodaya non-economic programmes are also included in the programme for co-ordination and are paid a small incentive for attendance at meetings and production of reports.

At field level, attached to each district office are field workers. Recruitment is effected according to the number of "divisions" - each division comprising 20 Sarvodaya Shramadana Societies. There is one Divisional Project Manager per Division.

The impact of the field worker on the development of the programme is critical, since it is this contact which makes or breaks the outreach to the villages from Sarvodaya District Centres. She or he is the bridge that links the community of which she or he is a part, and the broader forces that can be utilised for change. Because of the closeness of the Sarvodaya worker to the people and the contacts she or he develops with the community and village organisational structures, she or he is ideally placed to influence change. At the moment there is a total of over 1,149 villages in Sri Lanka participating in this savings and credit scheme indicating its rapid growth since its launch in 1986.

Our training programme places very heavy emphasis on this key link and has offered a large number of residential courses to society officers and Sarvodaya field workers. Before REP starts in any village, training is given in society management, book-keeping, reporting, decision-making, loan applications and entrepreneurship.

Savings and credit section managers are trained in accounting, loan and cash control, and divisional project managers also receive specialised training in communication, needs

identification, repayment and arrears procedures and skills transfer.

Now I will give you an idea of the loans we make to villagers. To apply for a loan a villager must be a member of the Shramadana Society which has reached the third stage of development . He/she must have established a savings discipline and undergone the training we have offered.

Loan applications can be for simple consumption needs such as wedding or funeral expenses or the purchase of a cow, or they can be for other income generation projects. Consumption loans can be granted at society level from savings accounts but income generating loans derived from donor funds must be approved by the village committee and passed up to district level for final approval. Provided sufficient funds are available this is usually granted.

The maximum loan size is Rs 12,500/- (or U.S. \$ 250) and the interest rate, which is set according to guidelines given by head office, is 20% per annum for income-generation activities. 5% is retained in the Society and 15% is paid to the District Office. The term of the loan varies according to the type of economic activity being undertaken. Therefore, REP harmonises the demands of repayment with the time when the borrower expects to be able to repay - an important development which adds greater sales and marketing power to the producer since he/she has a greater degree of choice over when to harvest and market produce or to complete manufacture and sale of goods.

The easy access to REP loans , the personal service through the field worker, and of course the very attractive interest rates have made REP very popular. The market demand is insatiable and the programme has been limited only by the availability of the funds in the revolving loan fund rather than by operational or structural constraints.

The security of the loan fund has been safeguarded by the presence of funds. These are -

- (a) Loan Risk Fund - The members should deposit at least 10% of the loan amount with the Village Society. These monies are refunded to the members only after repaying the loan in full.

- (b) Loans Security Fund - All members who take loans from the society must contribute 2 1/2% of the loan amount to this fund. This money must be deposited in the name of the society, with the district REP .

The variety of activities funded is vast, ranging from cottage industries like mat weaving to skilled trades such as welding, wood working, masonry, and bicycle repair to agricultural projects like farming, fruit and vegetable production and animal husbandry.

Virtually every small scale economic activity in Sri Lanka is represented somewhere in the portfolio of about 1,400 loans given to village societies up to October 1993.

The number of village Societies in which the programme operates is 1,149. The number of people who have saved money is 93,490. Total savings by the villages amounted to Rs 31,436,140. Number of beneficiaries who have obtained loans counted to 58,523 with a loan total amounting to Rs 163,164,533/-

The repayment rate of these loans was about 85%. The revolving loan fund is a little over Rs 50 million.

In passing I should mention that between 1989 and mid 1993 the principal objective of Sarvodaya was survival as an organisation. It is a well known fact that every instrument of the government was used not only to undermine Sarvodaya but also to completely paralyse it.

Among dozens of programmes affected by this hostile attitude of the government was a Children's Savings Programme under the Early Childhood Development Programme where over 200,000 children had saved in weekly installments over Rs 20 million. All these funds, by children between the ages 5 and 15 were generated by home gardening and weekly children's fairs. Unfortunately, the Central Bank directed us to refund all these monies and close down the total programme as that scheme purportedly violated the Finance Companies Act. The same fate fell on the REP Programme where we were forced to change our systems to fall in line with the regulations as they were

interpreted by the Central Bank. Of course in this environment it was not possible to supplement our loan fund from the Commercial Banks.

Now the conditions are different. But it will take some time before we could get into full gear. The Central Bank is fully co-operating with us in the "Repairing the Damage" job for which we are grateful to the Present Governor Mr H.B. Dissanayake and the Monetary Board.

As I know you will all agree from your own experiences elsewhere around the world, it is essential to keep modifying development programmes to correct mistakes, improve viability, management and monitoring, and above all to make them truly responsive to the needs of the poor. This is never an easy task, but the way we have approached it in SEEDS has been to try to push decision-making authority downwards to village level as far as possible and to avoid the dangers of a top-heavy hierarchical structure which is detached or removed from village life.

We have also decentralised managerial authority substantially to district level, encouraging regular meetings and policy planning seminars to take place so that programme changes are stimulated in a 'bottom-up' fashion rather than being imposed from head office in Colombo. Everywhere in SEEDS programmes, group activity has been encouraged not just to create cohesive social fabric in the village with which to change society, but also for the practical economic reasons to create collective purchasing, marketing and selling power amongst groups of producers.

Formation of 'govi haulas' or 'farmers groups' is now a very important activity to adapt the traditional social structures to suit better the needs of the smallest landholders and improve their income generating opportunities. We also emphasise formation of groups as a precondition of loan applications, in common with other successful micro-level loan programmes. This encourages group responsibility for repayment, interdependence, and a faster and more efficient revolving of our funds between one borrower and the next.



The REP programme needs to reach a sustainable level whereby its running costs at district level are met by the interest payments it receives from the revolving fund. We planned our budget from 1991-94 to reach substantially towards the level of what the experts call 'critical mass' when our revolving fund is sufficiently large and efficiently managed to be fully sustainable in this way. We are already about one third of the way there and are confident that our goal is achievable, particularly if we can increase our partnership with local banks, as we do in Kandy, Gampaha, Puttalam, Galle and Matara districts, which are committed to rural credit. Perhaps most important of all, our responsiveness to the need of our villagers has been shown in the launch of a brand new programme which started in May 1990.

As I have already explained, in 1987, SEEDS Rural Enterprise Programme was started in response to the enormous demand for economic development in Sarvodaya villages. Initially, villagers stated that limited access to credit was their major constraint. Results have shown that through the village's savings and credit sections, many villagers have achieved an increase in income, and a lessening of their personal debt.

However, through field experience, REP field workers state that rural producers are unable to achieve their potential for income generation due to lack of technical, business and marketing expertise. Rural markets become saturated due to lack of diversification; production capacity is not maximised, available resources are not utilised. In many cases it was apparent that the client had inadequate information on production processes, market demand and business techniques.

Consequently, extension services were initiated by REP to supplement and support the financial inputs. Small satellite units in agriculture, agro-processing, marketing and business training were started on an ad-hoc basis.

Now these have been incorporated into a larger programme called Rural Enterprise Development Services ( REDS), which is an integrated , advisory extension service primarily for REP borrowers in twenty districts in Sri Lanka.

REDS General Objective is to increase the number, diversity and profitability of viable Rural Enterprises within REP and ensure an improvement in the standard of living of the targeted communities.

This can be broken down into the following specific objectives.

- identification, development and promotion of new products.
- development of an effective, sustainable advisory service
- generation of knowledge and implementation strategies for small ventures that can be shared with other rural development organisations)-
- development of capacity to identify and develop viable solutions to the problems of rural enterprises
- generation of knowledge and mechanisms for promoting collective enterprises.

The programme works with the same formula of trained extension officers working with Sarvodaya Society borrowers at village level to build up the business and technical skills of these groups. Emphasis is placed in development of non-traditional crops, land products to provide alternative and/or supplementary income to producers. REDS therefore operates very closely with REP in approach, and supports new ventures and the expansion of existing enterprises.

In drawing a conclusion on Sarvodaya's poverty alleviation projects through its economic division SEEDS, we have tried to be led by villagers rather than by policy-makers, by people's needs rather than by availability of monetary resources.

In my view neither the government nor the private sector nor the so called NGO Sector could help the poor if we continue with the isolated approaches we are engaged in today. In Sri Lanka there is no systematic, common approach that had been mutually agreed upon. I think it is time now to give serious thought to this and arrive at a working solution. Simply because some say that NGOS are supposed to be erratic as far as their own social or financial transactions are concerned it should not make the government alienate itself from all NGOS. No government or private sector had ever succeeded in eradicating poverty without the help of NGOs and in particular what I call People's Movements or organisations such as

Sarvodaya. Sarvodaya does not want to identify itself as an NGO though we did it for official purposes as when we were confronted for three years by a so called Presidential Commission on NGOs. We would like to call ourselves a People's Organisation, a national level People's Organisation, or a people's movement in which the government, private sector and others can all participate on a common philosophy of personality, family, rural and urban community and national awakening, based on highest ethics of development we can conceive of.

For this to be a reality it is necessary for the government to give equal consideration to private sector as well as people's sector organisations as far as the activities in which they are involved to help people in their self-development are concerned. Today under the existing laws or the administrative regulations, the organisations which are not governmental or private sector have to operate under very difficult conditions. The latest emergency laws will dissuade most people from taking to social service activities. Therefore, my plea is for the government to initiate a process where all these three sectors can work together for the wellbeing of our people, particularly the poorest of the poor in our country.

---

*(From a talk delivered at the Central Bank Auditorium on 24.1.94  
sponsored by the Hatton National Bank)*

## BUDDHIST THOUGHT IN SARVODAYA PRACTICE

Among various facets of contemporary Buddhism two aspects have always attracted me. One is living Buddhism among the rural masses as understood and practised by them in their daily life. Second, the applicability of Buddhist teachings as a whole to meet the numerous challenges modern Sri Lankans face as individuals, families, communities and a nation. These challenges are not confined to a Sri Lankan context only. They have a direct relationship to what is taking place in the international scene as a whole as well. Therefore, what I am attempting to do in this paper is to describe as concisely as possible how through the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka, Buddhist Thought and its applications have developed during a period of four decades beginning from the mid-nineteen fifties.

The word Sarvodaya was coined by Mahatma Gandhi from two Sanskrit words Sarvam and Udayam. He believed that post-independent India should develop on a vision of working for the Welfare of All. He believed in a Welfare Society as opposed to a Welfare State of the western model. After independence he could not live long enough to guide the nation towards this ideal of Sarvodaya through concrete action programmes. However, his close followers led by Acharya Vinoba Bhave and Shri Jayaprakash Narayan developed programmes such as the *Bhoodan* (Land Gift), *Gramdan* (Village Gift), and *Shanth Sena* (Peace Army) movements and during their life times these were very successful.

Sri Lanka adopted the word Sarvodaya from India and was inspired by what was already achieved by the Gandhian Movement in that country. However the Sarvodaya Movement in Sri Lanka was nurtured and developed independent of the Indian experience in most aspects. This was primarily due to the Buddhist cultural background of Sri Lanka.

The word Sarvodaya itself was given a different connotation and meaning. The Buddha is the Supremely Enlightened or Awakened One. All Buddhists strive to attain Nibbana, the ultimate state of enlightenment or awakening. In his first discourse

Lord Buddha says “*chakkun udapadi, jnanan udapadi, panna udapadi, vijja udapadi and aloko udapadi.*” Awaken your eye (of Truth), awaken your knowledge, awaken your Wisdom, awaken your Science (of understanding), and awaken your Light, (within you). The word Sarvodaya was interpreted in the Sri Lankan Sarvodaya Movement as The Awakening of All.

## Levels of Awakening

The concept of human awakening for practical formulation of programmes is organised into six levels all of which are, however, inter-related.

Awakening of Human Personalities	( <i>Paurushodaya</i> )
Awakening of Families	( <i>Kutumbodaya</i> )
Awakening of Village Communities	( <i>Gramodaya</i> )
Awakening of Urban Communities	( <i>Nagarodaya</i> )
Awakening of Nations	( <i>Deshodaya</i> )
Awakening of The World Community	( <i>Vishvodaya</i> )

Each of these levels of awakening is categorised into many sectors again for practical purposes even though all these are interrelated and interdependent. The six broad sectors into which Sarvodaya has developed its activities are Spiritual, Moral, Cultural, Social, Economic and Political. In all these six sectors there should be an awakening process taking place from within individuals and extending to the world community in a harmonious way for real progress and peace.

The Buddha in His sermons exhorts monks to go forth into the world and work for the welfare of the people. Seeking people, going forth in search of them, a cardinal principle in Buddhism was adopted by Sarvodaya as its working ethos. Identifying needs wherever they are, and working with the people in order to meet such needs was the main objective of going to the people. Sarvodaya's philosophy and programme of work was thus fashioned deriving inspiration from the Buddha's teachings.

The Sarvodaya assumption is that the practical aspects of the Buddhist philosophy the people followed in the past could also be profitably utilized to sustain them in the present time. Sarvodaya



tested this assumption while working in the villages of Sri Lanka. As an example I can cite the pattern of agricultural life in the rural areas which has a number of practices inspired by Buddhist teachings.

There are numerous teachings attributed to Lord Buddha and His principal disciples. Some of these teachings have become unidentifiable elements of a popular living psychology of people. For example when something unusual or tragic occurs in their community or any other part of their country or the world an illiterate woman hearing this sad news may involuntarily utter with her hand on her cheek the words "*aniccan dukkhan anattan.*" She may know only vaguely that these words have a profound philosophical meaning pertaining to all living things. Impermanence, Pain and Non-substantiality are inescapable realities of every conditioned existence. In a positive sense the Buddha's unique teaching of the Principle of "Dependent Arising" (*paticcasamuppada*) would be the subconscious philosophical or psychological base from which the woman responded to the shocking news she heard.

The story of Kisagotami comes to my mind here. Kisagotami's only son had just died. She, overcome by intense pain of mind, went around asking people to provide her with a medicine to bring back the dead son to life. Finally she was asked to go to the Buddha. The Buddha asked her to fetch a handful of mustard seeds from a house where no death had taken place. Kisagotami went from one house to another, and finally realized that death came to all.

It is this process of realization in the individual, arising out of contact with others that Sarvodaya has based itself in developing its practical programmes. The awakening of the individual arises through realization. He comes into contact with others through a social interaction process, and in him there dawns the understanding. It is this understanding that illuminates his entire chain of actions thereafter. In the story of Kisagotami, she herself identified the truth, i.e. the inevitability of death in the context of living. Sarvodaya attempts to transfer such basic Buddhist teachings to the day to day experience of our people.

As a corollary of this realization Sarvodaya believes in self-help. Buddhism exhorts its followers to strive hard without becoming dependent on help from outside. The importance of self-help is emphasised while at the same time underscoring the group effort which ultimately brings the social process to a meaningful conclusion. Sarvodaya strived to achieve this balance between individual self-reliance and group self-help.

### **Application of Philosophy**

The problem faced by Sarvodaya is how best to identify these Buddhist thoughts in the psychological environments of people, develop these with the help of enlightened scholarship amongst us, relate them judiciously and selectively to the myriad of problems human beings and communities face at present, weave them into a comprehensive philosophical framework, and through processes of formal and non-formal education help people to absorb these refined philosophical thoughts again into their living culture. The sum total of this exercise is what Sarvodaya calls developing a Vision. It is this Vision that Sarvodaya has converted into a Mission with the participation of over 10000 village communities out of a total of 24000 village communities in Sri Lanka.

Sarvodaya Shramadana means Awakening of All in society worldwide. This is sought to be achieved through the sharing of labour and other voluntarily gifted resources for the personal and social awakening of all beginning with individuals and families at the community level. The critical mass of awakening in many communities will effect change at the national level and subsequently at the global level. In very concise terms, the mission of Sarvodaya Shramadana is to create a new global social order based on the values of Truth, Non-violence and Self-sacrifice and governed by the ideals of a participatory democracy. The decentralisation of power and resources, upholding of basic duties and rights, satisfaction of basic human needs, protection and nurturance of a healthy environment, non-violent conflict resolution and tolerance of cultural religious and linguistic differences will be given pride of place in such an order. The economic principle would be one of a sustainable (no-poverty no-affluence) society based on the sharing of resources and their prudent and mindful use.

It should be observed from what I have stated so far that the mission of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement was not to engage in an academic exercise to prove or disprove a particular view point from scholarly debates and treatises. On the other hand it was a genuine endeavour, however small, on the part of some concerned and committed human beings, like the present writer himself, to bring about a transformation for the better in the lives of millions of human beings the world over who have not yet been benefited by the development strategies practiced by the present decision makers.

In this endeavour, in the Sri Lankan context, we have attempted to learn as much as possible from the Buddhist teachings and practices and apply them to achieve our objectives. Sarvodaya may have failed to reach the high academic standards in our written expositions about our work as expected by well-known expatriate Sri Lankan scholars such as Gananath Obeyesekere (Social and Ethical Transformation in modern Theravada Buddhism - A Polemical Essay, Princeton ). Yet in the Sarvodaya philosophy and practice as evolved upto now in 37 years numerous individuals and village communities have come to accept that there is some hope for themselves in this self-development approach.

The attempts made by these scholars need a response because their assumptions are based on wrong premises. To describe Sarvodaya as a Movement started by "goodhearted but naive western intellectuals who see the movement in terms of their own utopian fantasies of a benevolent social order" is to mislead others as to what Sarvodaya's philosophy and programme is. Obeyesekere, in order to prove his points resorts to highly personal and irrelevant arguments. One is that "Ariyaratne with his educated Protestant background writes in English" which is, according to him, a characteristic of what he calls a "Protestant Buddhism."

I do not want to dwell at length on such criticism coming from academics without any basic understanding of Buddhist Practice and Sarvodaya Programmes of work. I really wanted to draw your attention to criticism often levelled at Sarvodaya and the nature of arguments marshalled in order to prove them. I wrote both in

English and Sinhala (more in Sinhala) depending on the audience I wish to address.

### **Sarvodaya Approach**

Sarvodaya in selecting Buddhist principles and practices had two important considerations : (1) Their immediate and long term benefit and relevance to modern day problems, and (2) The extent to which such principles and practices were incorporated into our own socio-economic life. Such principles and practices identified from past socio-economic life were not “just” incorporated in our programme of action. These were amended or even were reformulated to suit modern contexts. In Buddhism we have the principle of “*Ehi Passiko*” which loosely interpreted could mean “Come, Test it, Experience it yourself and then accept it.” That was Sarvodaya’s test method of both principle and experiences taken from the Buddhist philosophy.

Unfortunately, Obeysekera who states that we have only Shramadana (Sharing of Labour) as a successful strategy, taken from Buddhist practice, has not seen and experienced our programmes in action. Those come under six broad heads, namely, spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political life, which attempt to cover every aspect of human life. The difference between a family gathering or any other strategy such as ‘*kayya*’ (a corporate social action - in give and take spirit - found in agricultural life) may have and should have their parallels in other countries. But in Sri Lanka, in the past, nurtured by Buddhism, such practices gained a distinctive Buddhist flavour. What Sarvodaya has done is to carefully select such practices and reformulate these to suit modern social situations. This has to be understood by experiencing the Sarvodaya process personally. Empirical realization is the touchstone of such principles and practices. It is very difficult to understand them second or third hand, for example, by way of paid research assistants to collect data for you, while you analyse them seated in a university room, perhaps in the United States. As one of our own sociologists Prof. Nandasena Ratnapala has remarked “second or third hand research or research by means of ‘*podiyans*’ (ill-paid research assistants) is not the way to understand Sarvodaya experience. (New Horizons in Research Methodology, Colombo 1986, 53)



Let me examine some of the efforts made by Sarvodaya in relation to both theory and practice to achieve the above mentioned goals.

It has become a fad these days to talk about a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-linguistic society and the importance of providing for all these divisions in society so that no discrimination against any group is permitted under the law. While accepting the reality of the existence of this multiplicity of groups and the importance of accepting all as equals before the law Sarvodaya emphasises and advocates the positive principle of striving to achieve the Well-being or the Awakening of All. The compartmentalisation and separation of life needs to be overcome. Unless an individual develops in one's own mind respect towards all life such an individual cannot successfully awaken his or her own personality. The cultivation of this mental attribute of Metta - Loving Kindness - as advocated by the Buddha is indispensable for the spiritual progress of any individual. More importantly the establishment of this principle in the minds and hearts of a critical mass of people in all countries of the world, I believe, is the surest way to set about building a tolerant and peaceful world order.

This process of activity is not based on a vision of a glorious past conceived in our fantasy. We have observed how the philosophy of Buddhism can be translated into action in the real experiences of the people. Buddhist teachings backed by small group action strengthened the rural life of our people. What Sarvodaya did was to understand the significance of such teachings and small group action, relate them to one another in the context of modern experience.

*Satara Brahma Viharas*, (the four sublime abodes), namely, *Metta* (Loving Kindness), *Karuna* (Pity - what Sarvodaya applies as Compassionate Action), *Muditha* (Sympathetic Joy) and *Upekkha* (Equanimity), are the foundations on which Sarvodaya advocates the promotion of personality awakening. The more a human society has individuals mindful of their own personality awakening as a spiritual objective the better placed will such a society be to achieve justice, peace and progress. In the *Karaniyametta Sutta*, *Mettanisansa Sutta*, *Maha-sudassana Sutta*, *Khaggavisana sutta* and many other suttas Buddha strongly



advocates these four qualities to be constant companions of a good Buddhist. Sarvodaya appeals to all human beings "Respect Life, Engage yourself in service to others to remove the causes that bring about physical and mental pain and fear in them, cultivate detached joy resulting from such selfless activity and learn to face loss and gain, fame and blame, comfort and suffering with equanimity."

### **A Concern for All**

This approach of Sarvodaya has successfully worked in the villages where Sarvodaya is active. Sarvodaya development programmes are active in more Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian villages than those done by their respective religious organisations. The non-Buddhist people have subscribed to the Sarvodaya philosophy of working for the well-being or awakening of all from their religious perspectives. They participate as one human family in Shramadana (Gift of Labour) and Shanthi Sena (Peace Brigade) camps, Relief Rehabilitation Reconstruction Reconciliation and Reawakening projects and programmes conducted in civil war affected areas, leadership and occupational training programmes, and in all other Sarvodaya activities.

This approach based on Buddhist teachings emphasises the oneness of human being without any emphasis on factors that divide the community into fractions. Race, caste, gender, belief etc. had no relevance in such an approach. Compassion for all even extending to cover animals and the environment made Sarvodaya activity reach all communities and all religions because respect for life and compassion were the foundation on which such activity was based.

The people were motivated to identify their basic needs and discover the extent to which such needs are satisfied. Such an exercise involving small group action did not basically differ from a Buddhist to a Hindu, Christian or a Muslim village. Leadership was identified and in such an exercise the role of the clergy in each religion was given due recognition. Religious rituals were usefully utilised in order to motivate and involve people in development programmes.

Sarvodaya's approach is now well documented. A study done by ICED at the University of Connecticut (ED. by Phillip Coombs - 1990 ) shows how in Buddhist and Christian villages the respective religious rituals are utilised for involving people's participation. The manner in which religious amity is supported by the temple, church, the Dewale and the mosque is also attested in other studies. The practical levels to which Sarvodaya has accomplished its objectives could be viewed only by involving oneself in this total context.

It is natural for one to refer to the question as to the present troubled situation in Sri Lanka and question Sarvodaya's role in this context. The question may be posed that if Sarvodaya's activities had been going on successfully how could three insurrections, one still having its heavy toll of human suffering in North Sri Lanka take place. In 1971 and 1988 - 89 when the two Southern youth insurrections took place none of Sarvodaya trained youth took part in such violence. As the complex forces of these youth insurrections were directly related to the centralisation of political power, Sarvodaya could do very little to arrest them. The source of destruction emanated from the highest and centralised political and governmental structures over which Sarvodaya had no control. But in keeping Sarvodaya youth away from violence and coming to their help once the insurrection ceased, Sarvodaya did its expected role. Many a youth involved in the 1971 insurrection received help from Sarvodaya and re-joined the main stream political and social life.

The same phenomenon can be seen at work today. In the case of the turmoil that is going on in the North and East, Sarvodaya is doing what it can in order to rehabilitate the almost destroyed country. In times of racial clashes particularly in 1983, in the South, and thereafter in the North, Sarvodaya committed itself to help and succour human beings and did its best to alleviate their sufferings. In a very dark age of our recent history, almost under siege, Sarvodaya strived to protect human rights. We could do all such activities because of the great inspiration the philosophy and programme received from Buddhism.

Meetings of Sarvodaya workers are known as Family Gatherings. This is to inculcate the idea that in spite of our

differences we are one species (Vasetta Sutta Majjhima Nikaya 11, 156 ff) and as such we should consider ourselves as one human family. In all family gatherings and other Sarvodaya programmes time is set apart for a common meditation and religious observances. Common meditation is based on *Anapanasati Bhavana* (Mindful Breathing) and *Metta Bhavana* (Meditation on Loving Kindness). In religious observances according to the numbers of people present the smaller religious groups are given the first opportunity to observe their faiths so that psychologically they can overcome any sense of minority or inferior feelings they may have. This in a way we believe is a continuation of the Asokan tradition of respecting adherents of all religious faiths as admonished by the Buddha himself.

### **Shramadana Camps**

*Dana* (Giving away, gifting, sharing) is a very important principle in Buddhist teachings. It is so in other world religions as well. Sarvodaya calls all people to share whatever they are capable of with others as their contribution to build a better society. Gifting manual labour (*Shramadana*), Land (*Bhoomidana*), Knowledge (*Gnanadana*), Skills (*Shilpadana*), Spiritual Knowledge (*Dhammadana*) and so on are the ways in which anybody rich or poor, educated or uneducated can contribute to the Sarvodaya effort.

A shramadana camp provides the physical, psychological, social and the working environment in which these gifts as well as other forms of group conduct can be practiced. Hundreds of such camps are held throughout the year on different locations. The physical output of such camps may be access roads to villages, renovation or construction of village tanks and irrigation systems, community drinking water projects, environmental and reforestation schemes, community health work, housing and so on. On the other hand the practice of sharing, pleasant language, constructive work and equality in association bring about a social benefit that cannot be expressed in monetary terms. At this stage what we call psychological infrastructure building is attempted.

For a lay Buddhist the practice of not only *Dana* but also *Sila* (Morality) and *Bhavana* (Meditation) is important. The shramadana camp environment provides an excellent opportunity

to initiate particularly the young and youth to these practices. Our societies are fast moving towards embracing the unchecked materialism of modern economics. In a free market open economy the religious and spiritual heritage of our societies have been brushed away leaving room for competitive and possessive instincts of individuals to flourish. Youth, women and children are the first victims of this societal malaise. Alcoholism, drug addiction, crimes, child prostitution, spread of sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS are taking dangerous proportions. All macro structures in the political and economic fields knowingly or unknowingly are contributing to aggravate this situation. The formal and non-formal educational activities conducted by Sarvodaya in camps and other places are doing their utmost to combat these evils and create public opinion against them.

### **People's Participation**

In the context of the modern day it is through education coupled with meaningful social action that we could deal with such social problems. Buddhism had taught us that the correct understanding of the problem (a form of *Samma Ditti*), is the first step towards the solution. Based on this understanding a programme in which small groups carry out basic social action has to be formed. Sarvodaya recognises the importance of such small groups beginning from the family-kinship network, neighbourhood groups, the village, the street community in urban areas, and attempts to mobilise these to achieve its desired objectives.

Participation of the people is the foundation of the social action programmes of Sarvodaya. Such participation is conceived in (1) understanding a problem (2) formulating a plan of action to deal with the problem (3) putting that plan into effect (4) evaluating the implementation and correcting the plan it, if necessary and (5) sharing its results.

Personality and Family awakening can successfully take place only if the village community is on a path to Village Awakening. After our countries went under alien rulers for centuries our village communities were exploited and marginalised. While numerous macro rural development schemes were implemented



with foreign aid and grants the benefits of most of these accrued to the already rich and powerful thus increasing the gap between the marginalised and the privileged. The top down plans simply did not work. Sarvodaya, on the other, hand does not believe that our present economic and political structures modelled on the western experience will ever change the situation for the better. The present system needs a radical transformation that permits our own indigenous genius, cultural traditions and ethos of the people to emerge in the form of a new system. Sarvodaya learnt a great deal from the Gandhian Gram Swaraj (Village Self-government) concept of India. The philosophical basis for the Sri Lankan experiment was greatly enriched by the early Buddhist literature as well.

The Maha Mangala Sutta, Parabhava Sutta, Maha Parinibbana sutta, Cakkavatta Sihanada Sutta, Agganna Sutta and Vyaggapajja Sutta are some of the teachings that inspired the Sarvodaya thinking on Village Re-awakening. The basic principles on which a sustainable and progressive society serving both the *attha* (economic) and *dhamma* (moral) well being of the people may be founded can clearly be developed from these teachings.

The Buddhist teachings, it must be emphatically stated here, are not taken by Sarvodaya merely because of their philosophical importance. Whenever a teaching had a practical social relevance it was immediately adopted by Sarvodaya. Take for example the teaching that a human being differs from another not because of birth but because of action. The Buddha put this teaching into practice by admission of those considered as of low birth into his Order of Monks. Sarvodaya revived this Buddhist practice by starting its initial programme among a community of socially discarded people.

Thus working with the underprivileged became an important approach of Sarvodaya. Such underprivileged people could come from the socially depressed, economically deprived, politically exploited communities living in any part of the country. It became Sarvodaya's duty to assist these people to assert their value as human beings and help them to share the material and non-material resources in society on an equal basis with others.



Another aspect of Sarvodaya's philosophy and practice is observed in the Movement's attitude towards women. The Buddhist teachings state that the Buddha was born to the benefit not only of men, but of women too. "The entrance is open to men as well as women". To a king who was worried about the girl child born to him, the Buddha said that "A woman child may prove a better offspring than a male" ( Kindred Sayings 1.111 ).

An American scholar who had experience at the grassroot level observes this aspect in the following manner. "It is not surprising, therefore, that the revitalisation of the Buddhist social ethic brings with it an increased openness to the role of women" (Joanna Macy - Dharma and Development 1983).

The Sarvodaya Movement from its inception understood the value of women in development and in every village organised mothers groups to mobilise women. In this programme they were imparted with knowledge and skills, made to participate in their own programmes and finally empowered to them status as equal members of society. The process of empowerment and conscientisation had taken place since Sarvodaya's birth in our country. The empowerment of women is thus a vital aspect of Sarvodaya's philosophy and practice which owes its inspiration to Buddhist teachings.

### **Different Paradigms**

Mahatma Gandhi in his Panchayat Raj, says: "You cannot build non-violence on a factory civilization, but it can be built on self-contained villages. Rural economy as I have conceived it, eschews exploitation altogether, and exploitation is the essence of violence. You have, therefore, to be rural-minded before you can be non-violent. If my dream is fulfilled, and if every one of the seven lakhs of villages becomes a well-living republic in which there are no illiterates, in which no one is idle for want of work, in which everyone is usefully occupied and has nourishing food, well-ventilated dwellings and sufficient Khadi for covering the body, and which villages know and observe the laws of hygiene and sanitation, such a state must have varied and increasing needs, which it must supply unless it would stagnate...."

The UN Human Development Report 1994 accepts the need for a new development paradigm: "To address the growing challenge of human security, a new development paradigm is needed that puts people at the centre of development, regards economic growth as a means and not an end, protects all life opportunities of future generations as well as the present generations and respects the natural systems on which all life depends."

Both from the Gandhian point of view and from the experience of the last five UNDP Development Decades it is quite clear that full human development and happiness cannot be achieved by centralisation. The need of the times is decentralisation. Centralisation as a system is inconsistent with a non-violent structure of society. Non-violence, peace, kindness, contentment and happiness are qualitative states. These can best be nurtured and sustained at decentralised levels such as the individual, the family and the small community. Sarvodaya believes that a new social order devoid of present global dangers can only be built if the existing macro socio-economic and political structures can be transformed to serve these levels rather than by being in a position to control them.

We are reminded at this stage of the statements made by the Buddha in the presence of Vassakara, the prime minister of Magadha why the Vajjins were a strong republic. The seven principles of the Vajjin's social conduct that contributed to their strength and prosperity over two thousand five hundred years ago are equally relevant to our time if we can take the bold step of decentralisation of our political and economic structures. In fact Sarvodaya has incorporated these seven principles of non-decline into the rules of the Sarvodaya village level societies.

Although the principles refer to a group of Republican kings, explaining their political pattern (Digha Nikaya 11, 72 - 76), the principle does have an immediate relevance to modern democracy. According to the Buddha these principles, when practised would promote the progress of those who participate in it. Sarvodaya has recognised the importance of those principles in the people's practical life in two main ways.

1. By promoting their participation in small group activity in which such principles are practised. The people make themselves conscious and aware of their economic and social problems, plan their own programmes to solve such problems themselves.
2. The people are made conscious at the grassroots level about their rights and privileges. The democratic process of give and take, toleration, sharing power, etc. are put to work in small and medium group activity. The people learn what constructive social protest is and practise such strategies.

## **Communication Technology**

We who live in modern times have a much greater advantage over the ancient village republics of India such as the Vajjins or Lichchavis. There are certain modern developments in science and technology which they could not have even dreamed of. There is a wealth of scientific knowledge and technological know-how that modern man has mastered which can be used by decentralised societies. Of very special significance to the subject of decentralisation that I am now discussing is communication technology. The so-called communication high way is now becoming a reality. The most important question we have to ask ourselves at this stage is who is going to get the real benefit out of these modern discoveries and inventions? If the current national and international structures are going to remain as they are then we will have no doubt who the beneficiaries will be. On the other hand we have to raise another question as to how best the present disadvantaged and marginalised people of the world could get benefited from these advancements in science and technology. My answer is the vision of highly decentralised communities in the world getting networked together bypassing the centres of power. This vision has to be translated into concrete organised action in every field of development and they have to be built on moral principles we have outlined above. If we fail to do this, organised greed, illwill and ignorance (of spiritual realities) will bring our world still nearer to total destruction.

If this challenge has to be faced successfully, village communities have to be empowered socially, economically and

technologically. Social empowerment includes community capacity building, early childhood development, community health and environment, conflict resolution and peace making, disaster management, applied research and communication, gender and development, and development education. Economic empowerment includes development of skills in savings and credit management, rural enterprise development, management training, and rural enterprise support services such as introduction of new products, and consultancy and marketing services. Under technological empowerment, appropriate rural technology, agricultural and agro-industrial skills, grain storage technology, vocational and technical training, solar power technology and applied research and communication technology are included.

When the above three categories of empowerment are taken as a whole, a village community is expected to graduate in five phases of development. These are the psychological infrastructure building phase, social infrastructure building phase, legal incorporation phase, economic development phase, and self sufficiency phase. Right through these phases Sarvodaya villages interact with one another and generally a cluster of ten villages work together as a unit. When one thousand such clusters reach a certain level of development, it is believed that the totality of the processes thus released will influence the decision makers to re-orient their top down development programmes to conform to the people's participatory development process released from the bottom up.

Basically, over 80% of the people in the world who belong to the poor and lower middle classes are not so much interested in growth rates and GNPs. They are primarily interested to ensure for themselves optimum levels of security pertaining to their physical security, environmental security, food security, health security, economic security, and political security.

### **Priority Areas**

What does Buddhist philosophy offer in the above mentioned areas of improving the quality of life of people? In our experience, there is an abundant wealth of information and guiding principles pertaining to all those subjects under



consideration. Take for example early childhood development. Buddhist texts vividly describe the factors affecting the conception of a child, growth of the child in the mother's womb, the birth of the child, its progressive development through infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. This ancient knowledge supplemented with modern scientific findings can easily provide us future directions for healthy early childhood development.

The Buddhist teaching has led and inspired Sarvodaya to formulate the outlines of its own development philosophy. The basic assumption here is that every individual's basic needs should be first satisfied. The material as well as the non-material resources should be utilised first and foremost to satisfy the basic needs of all. The secondary and tertiary needs can be identified at the next stage.

This is followed by two other principles: (1) As far as possible the relationship between human beings and the environment should be mutually supportive and enriching. (2) Exploitation of human beings should not be made under any condition. Respect for life and the upholding of human rights emanate from this principle.

Development should be decided by the people and should include social, economic, political, spiritual, psychological and cultural areas of human life. It should not be a one-sided process looking only at economic improvement. The people should be in a position to participate and share the fruits of development as far as possible controlling the rise of excess needs while leaving a fair share of whatever material necessary to satisfy other's basic needs.

We are living in a world where a considerable proportion of the world's population is ageing. Considerable efforts are being made to prolong life. However, everything which has a beginning also has to come to an end. That is inevitable. Therefore, we should not only learn the art and science of living longer, but also that of facing death which is inevitable. In the Buddhist tradition the practice of *Anicca Bhavana* (meditation on impermanence) is an essential component of spiritual training. In the educational system every human being is given an understanding of what the human personality is. *Paticcasamuppada Dhamma* (teaching on



dependent arising) consisting of twelve interdependent causal factors, gives this understanding. This twelvefold formula represents an explanation of a person in bondage. It also explains in the negative form, or when understood in the reverse order, the process of freedom from this bondage.

Another example is food which is a basic human need. According to the Buddha while material food is the first and foremost nutriment there are three other nutriments we should be mindful of. The second nutriment is the sensory perceptions, stemming from the fact that people are sensory-bound. The third nutriment is mental dispositions or volitions. Kalupahana calls this intentionality or the individual's decision-making or goal-setting capacity. Finally, consciousness, which is generally associated with memory is the last nutriment. All these four nutriments are founded on craving (*Tanha*). Craving contributes to suffering. Hence, to overcome suffering, one has to eliminate craving.

This simple but profound teaching which is very much a part of our culture goes diametrically against what takes place in our world as development. What has gone on as development is nothing else but an intense effort to create increased craving in human minds and releasing forces of mass production involving vast quantities of nonrenewable and limited natural resources to satisfy that craving. The result is uncontrollable pollution of the environment, destruction of ecological systems, disruption of cultures and economies which were sustained for centuries, breakdown of human families and communities, social unrest and conflict both at national and international levels, and in short, breakdown of all life support systems.

According to Buddhist teachings, what is important is the avoidance of both self- mortification and self- indulgence. In the present day world context, Sarvodaya advocates the concept of a no-poverty, no-affluence society. This is the middle path advocated by the Buddha. Such a society need not destroy nature, value systems, or cultures. As Mahatma Gandhi expressed, the world has no resources to satisfy the greed of one man, but the world has enough to satisfy the needs of all men. Therefore, the Sarvodaya development strategy advocates Right Livelihood

(Samma Ajiva) where the satisfaction of basic and secondary human needs take priority in all development efforts. A participatory democracy and a sustainable economy can be built only if human beings make up their minds to find harmony between sensory satisfaction and spiritual happiness.

It is appropriate at this stage to mention the five cosmic laws the Buddha enunciated as guiding principles to be followed in human affairs in dealing with human beings, other living creatures, and nature. These are the cosmic laws pertaining to genetic composition (*Bija Niyama*), the cosmic law pertaining to seasons (*Utu Niyama*), the cosmic law pertaining to social phenomenon (*Dhamma Niyama*), the cosmic law pertaining to causation (*Kamma Niyama*), and the cosmic law pertaining to the mind (*Citta Niyama*). As we are living in an age when everybody speaks of globalization, global village concepts and global trade and so on, it is appropriate for Buddhist scholars to devote time to expand on these cosmic laws and discover ways and means of applying these profitably to global human conduct and behaviour in all areas of human activity.

The issue of conservation of bio-diversity is high on the world development agenda at this time. Can the law of *Bija Niyama* throw some light into the debate? Serious climatic changes are adversely affecting our over populated and over polluted world. Can the principle of *Uthu Niyama* lead us to some possible solution? Not only between countries and within nations but within families as well there are a lot of disruptions, rivalries and even bloodshed. Can the principles of *Kamma Niyama* and *Dhamma Niyama* enlighten us to find a new way to bring about harmony and peace? The psychological imbalances and disturbances may be the cause that led certain human beings to act in an insane manner in recent incidents like the gas attacks in Japanese subways and bomb attacks in Oklahoma in United States which resulted in loss of a large number of human lives and injuries to many times more. Can the law of *Citta Niyama* provide us a lead to bring about more peace within human minds? These are areas which need a great deal of research and study, not purely for academic purposes but with a view to finding solutions to crying problems humanity as a whole face.

The greatest message that Sarvodaya gives to the world in the 21st century is the message of peace and tolerance. Such a message can only be realised when it begins in the human heart. It should thus begin in the individual and then flow to the family, community, society and the world. Toleration of others, equality and sharing of resources and power without the exploitation of human being by others is the final objective. Violence should be eschewed at all levels . It is in such a context where we learn to tolerate our differences and refrain from exploiting others that a new world order may be created. Sarvodaya is searching for strategies to build such a world order. It possesses a tested strategy to achieve this objective. Can we all coming from all parts of the world realise the importance of this objective and muster sufficient courage and strength to put this strategy to action? In this unique exercise all of us may not reach Nirvana; but I am sure for most of us the world then could be a more satisfactorily fulfilling and beautiful place to live in.

---

*(Lecture delivered in Honolulu, Hawaii on June, 3 - 8, 1995).*

**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH DELIVERED BY  
DR. A.T. ARIYARATNE ON THE OCCASION OF  
PRESENTING THE IL-GA MEMORIAL AWARD FOR  
PUBLIC SERVICE - SEOUL • KOREA • 2ND SEPT. 1995**

The most visible elements of modern human society seem to be revolving around concepts of achieving power, wealth and gratification of animal instincts in man. It is greed, illwill and self-centeredness that lie at the root of these base desires. There is a lot of media coverage given to the vicious results of this situation such as human sufferings caused by wars, mass murders, individual crimes, terminal diseases like AIDS and most people living in a state of fear.

In this darkness human beings appear from time to time who try to shed some light into the human lives and communities around them. They draw out the love and goodness in human beings and in their communities. Dr Yong-ki Kim was such a great human personality whose life and service you are commemorating today. It is my good fortune that I am called upon to be present here on this occasion. It gives me great delight and inspiration to continue the work I am doing in the spirit of Il-Ga, the fond name by which he was popularly known.

First of all I would like to pay my tribute to the Board of Trustees of Il-Ga Memorial Award Foundation for the effort they are putting in to perpetuate the memory of this great human personality and continue with his mission. I am grateful to them for selecting me to receive the prestigious 1995 IL - GA Memorial Award on this occasion. This I consider to be a recognition and an honour given to tens and thousands of my brothers and sisters who are living in rural areas of Sri Lanka trying to build a sustainable and peaceful society based on values such as love, justice and service which Dr Kim passionately pursued.

When I received your letter informing me that I have been chosen unanimously to receive this prestigious award for Public Service I felt very humble. I compared the great sacrifice that Il-Ga had made to his people compared to what I may have rendered to humanity in my lifetime. I was born 22 years after he was born. He received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service in 1966, three years before I received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 1969.



He was born to a Christian family and he lifted up his service in the true spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, being non-sectarian in his approach to human service. I, born to a Buddhist family, try to serve in the true spirit of Lord Buddha's teachings by being non-sectarian and trying to be compassionate to all living beings. He had absolute trust in rural communities and village life which I share with him. Like Mahatma Gandhi, education was foremost in his mind. The dignity of labour in working with hands was an integral part of the kind of education he believed in. Education is meaningful when only it awakens human personality to the fullest. Taking all these into consideration I have to say that the "Bokminism" - the will to strive for the way of living in truth is the principle that is common to both the Movement he founded in Korea and the Sarvodaya Movement in Sri Lanka in which we are engaged.

Sarvodaya means the awakening of all in every respect. Every human being should be provided with a physical, social, moral, cultural, economic and political environment in which his or her personality can be awakened to the fullest to bring in the highest joy of living. The family unit should awaken to the fullest. Then only the members of the family can attain the fullest fulfillment. The community organisations, I believe, should be the foundation on which not only individual and family awakening should take place, but also should be the foundation on which the nations and the global society should be built.

With these high ideals, 38 years ago we launched the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka. Today we are working tirelessly to assist ten thousand village communities out of a total of twenty four thousand in our country to tread the path of Sarvodaya.

If we are to build a society where peace and prosperity for all are to be achieved we have to give highest priority to the values of truth, non-violence and selflessness. Our priority should be to help those who are the poorest and the most powerless to overcome their poverty and powerlessness. To empower those who are at the lowest stratum in society programmes have to be launched which simultaneously release processes of social, economic and the technological empowerment. This means an integrated programme where spiritual, moral and cultural elements as well as social, economic and political factors are given equal and balanced consideration.



Through the Sarvodaya development programmes in Sri Lanka we have succeeded in motivating poor and powerless communities to develop their self-reliance, community participation and planning scientifically a programme of action. As a result of this in thousands of places there are daily efforts made to improve nutrition, health, educational, social and spiritual levels of people ranging from pre-school children to aged people. Children and women work shoulder to shoulder with youth and men to build a just and sustainable society in their rural communities.

This award given to me today has another great significance. Your country and my country have a lot of common cultural roots. Your people and our people should come closer together. Already very friendly ties exist between the two governments of our countries and our two peoples. It is my task now to do whatever small services I can do with my colleagues in the Sarvodaya Movement to strengthen our bonds of friendship.

Your people have seen wars. At this moment our people are also experiencing a minor civil war in the northern and the eastern parts of our country. Our efforts should not only be directed to improve the standards of living and spiritual advancement of our people but we should also do everything possible to build bridges of peace and brotherhood in the hearts and minds of our people first and then the peoples of the world next. The world has had enough of bloodshed and human suffering. There are millions who have become orphaned, widowed, disabled and homeless. Most of them have had nothing to do with violence. They were only victims of ideological, communal and various other forms of violence. We should work very hard to remove once and for all from the minds of people the seeds of division and alienation, and urge them in every possible way to think as one global family shedding all man-made barriers.

Let us try to build this world into a global society consisting of non-violent communities which are networked both at the level of the mind by spiritual means and the level of friendly communication through highly developed modern communication technology. Korea which has such a wealth of spiritual energy and a highly advanced economy should be a beacon-light for the rest of us in Asia at the turn of the century. If we can achieve this we would have truly remembered and honoured Dr. Yong-ki Kim our beloved servant of humanity.

## BANKING WITH THE POOR - NGOs AND BANKS

I am thankful to SANASA , the Federation of Thrift and Credit Co-operative Societies Ltd. in Sri Lanka, and particularly its President Mr P.A. Kiriwandeniya for inviting me to speak at this Workshop on the subject - "Banking with the Poor." I have been invited to speak on " Why NGOs need Banks".

As a representative of a sister organisation, the Sarvodaya Movement, I would like to compliment SANASA for their excellent record of service to the credit needs of the rural people in Sri Lanka. Particularly through the organising of Savings and Credit SANASA has proved that traditionally organised self-help groups in villages , when properly organised , trained, assisted and co-ordinated could play a very effective role in assisting the poor in our country to improve their quality of life.

Basic groups of people when organised for their self-development and evolve horizontally or laterally into nation-wide networks of people's development efforts, will necessarily have to undergo and transform themselves either to co-exist or to confront macro organisations whether they are political or economic. To me the links between banks and people's organisations appear to be an effort to bring about a certain kind of collaboration to fight effectively the increasing levels of poverty in countries.

Sri Lanka's macro statistical figures pertaining to its economy are very promising. Some people are even speaking of Sri Lanka reaching a NIC status by year 2000. GNP is rising and the per capita income also may be reaching the U.S.\$ 500 mark very soon. Growth rates also increased. Inflation is kept down below 12%. All these macro figures are excellent.

As far as the poorest of the poor and the poor in general are concerned even the official figures indicate that over 60% are below the poverty line. May be an equal percentage are suffering from chronic mal-nutrition. About 20% out of that suffer from acute under nourishment. The environmental and ecological conditions in localities where the poor are living are becoming increasingly unfit for human survival and sustainability. Almost a complete breakdown of value systems, addiction to anti-social

practices are also seen in these environmentally and ecologically degenerate communities. In modern society the rich cannot live isolated from the poor and without being affected by the very serious environmental, economic and social degradation taking place within the poor communities. Therefore, the future of even the affluent and the powerful people very much depends on the situation that the poor and the powerless are subjected to.

The very idea of banking with the poor and linking people's organisations and basic groups to the existing banking systems has to be welcome. Personally, I am happy that a serious look into this matter is now been taken at the initiative of the Foundation for Development Co-operation based in Brisbane, Australia.

I belong to an organisation which is also involved in facilitating credit for the poor. We have from our experience come to the conclusion that you too believe, that the poor can be motivated, organised and trained to be capable savers, credit receivers, producers and repayers. Perhaps they may be less risky than the sophisticated rich who know how to manipulate finances to increase profitability to suit their ends.

As far as the poor are concerned, in our experience instead of motivating them towards an affluent society, we have succeeded in motivating them to work towards a no-poverty society. The affluent society per se as an objective is an easy prey for people to lose their values that keep their individual personalities, family units and the community life together and on a sustainable level. So, the question is without losing the integral nature of the human personality, the family and the community and also enhancing micro nature of their economic activities can we bring in increased credit to facilitate greater income which in turn would help them to improve their quality of life.

In the SANASA programmes as well as those at Sarvodaya, to my knowledge these value systems have been retained and in their grouping mobilisation programmes, lower transaction costs and substitute collaterals with group guarantees, this is well seen. The commercial banks and other funding sources have to realise that it is not only commercially sound linkages that have been established, within these basic communities but also an attempt

has been made to retain those spiritual, moral and cultural linkages within them. The main question that we have to resolve is to what extent these lateral non commercial linkages from the bottom-up process could be harmonised with the top down commercial linkages to be established with banks and other macro level credit institutions.

Perhaps, Mr Kiriwandeniya himself may remember that about 20 years ago with a Commercial Bank we established a system to obtain loan capital requirements for a community based orchid project with a private firm as an intermediary to supply the technical know-how for the orchid growing and purchasing products and marketing them. Of course, an international non-governmental organisation provided that commercial bank with a guarantee on our behalf. At the end of the project the intermediary company and the bank gained and both Sarvodaya and the Pre-school teachers who did the micro project were the losers. In other words the bank's objective of recovering the money and the firm's objective of maximizing their profits and making no losses were ably realised while the poor borrower and the producer had to lose.

I am happy that the banks are presently more enlightened than before and they are now seriously trying to establish links with the people's sector through mutual discussion and concurrence rather than by rigid commercial policies that guide them with their borrowers and customers. Not only the NGOs need banks but the banks also need the NGOs.

So far I have avoided using the word NGO because it gives a very negative connotation to any dialogue based on equality of association for decision-making. We have to coin a new word like people's organisations or social sector organisations to replace the word NGO.

We have been organising micro groups and micro projects with direct community participation and self-reliance in a society where macro organisations have been swallowing up every material and human resource which could be utilised to give increased wealth and power to the elite minority that control our societal life. Any kind of linkage we establish should have more



advantages to the disadvantaged groups to narrow the gap between the haves and the have-nots. This is not only in the area of loan capital requirements or other economic needs, but also with regard to the space people have pertaining to political decision-making.

It is our contention that poverty and powerlessness go hand in hand as much as affluence and power. In other words for a successful linkage between the bank sector and the so called people's sector should be based on very clear legislative enactments which give them functional freedom and show them the boundaries within which they can operate. There is no such legal provision for the people's sector or non-governmental sector. Without correcting this situation people's groups will be very hesitant to join hands with either the government or the private sector organisations fully without which we can never expect the poverty situation to change.

There is a certain very poor sector of the population especially the minors that no bank or financial institution will cater to. In fact Sarvodaya has catered to this population and mobilised Minor's Savings Deposits on a very informal scale. The deposits thus mobilised over a period of ten years amounted to approximately Rs 20 million. The total number of depositors were over 200,000. The deposits that were mobilised ranged from -/25 cts. upward. Due to Governmental intervention Sarvodaya was compelled to suspend this scheme. However with the blessings of the present Governor of the Central Bank Sarvodaya is proposing to recommence this scheme on a more formal basis and where hopefully proper legislation would be formulated.

The newly enforced Emergency Laws on the NGO sector are not going to help any expansion in the NGO sector as nobody would like to take a risk of being imprisoned for five years if the books are not maintained properly. Of course my organisation Sarvodaya has no problem in this regard as we have been subjected to the scrutiny of a Presidential Commission for 3 years. This Commission which in my opinion violated the principles of natural justice and was full of prejudice, malice and bias opened our eyes to the need for a system of just laws giving freedom for people's organisations or NGOs to operate in this country.



The 16 guiding principles for self-help groups you have outlined are acceptable to Sarvodaya. In fact we are working according to most of these principles. There is no problem with regard to these. The problem is the nature of the macro political economy which leaves hardly any opportunity for the micro groups to extend laterally as well as evolve themselves vertically to take their just and equal place in the economic activities of this country without any structural obstacles. The free market economy should be open to the organised non-profit people's sector also.

Sarvodaya Movement takes a holistic view of the problems of poverty, environmental degradation, ecological instability, increasing lawlessness and crimes, violation of fundamental human rights, suppression of human freedoms and the state of lack of peace in the country. The most important sector of accessibility of credit for the poor is also linked to the broader environment in which we live and work.

Under these circumstances Sarvodaya begins its programmes to help village and urban communities build a psycho social infrastructure initially by participating in activities which would satisfy one or more of their basic human needs. Self-reliance, community participation and a planned programme of action guide them in these activities. In the next stage people are assisted to get themselves organised into groups such as pre-school children, school going children, youths, mothers, farmers and others. Generally all these groups are related in a functional way to the satisfaction of basic needs affecting them. During the third stage a formal training in skills which are needed for basic needs satisfaction such as management, book keeping, savings mobilisation, credit disposal and repayments etc. come among others pertaining to integrated village development. During the fourth stage Sarvodaya Economic Enterprise Development Programme enters the community in the form of a four pronged project.

Initially Rural Enterprise Programme (REP) come in with savings, credit and related activities leading to micro enterprise development. Sarvodaya Management Training Institute (SMTI) comes in with the necessary training inputs. Thirdly, Rural Enterprises Development Services (REDS) comes in with the

necessary training and advice on product development, marketing and so on. Lastly, Income Generation Projects (IGP) at a micro or macro level are encouraged and started through banking and other facilities.

Under the REP scheme the amounts mobilised as savings amounts to over Rs 31 million. The latest repayment rate of the loan scheme is 85%. The loan Revolving Fund is presently over Rs 50 million.

In our experience in all these sectors the government and private sector financial institutions can come in as partners. They should place at the disposal of the people not only their knowledge and technical expertise and required capital, but also the assistance the people's organisations need at regional or national level in institution building and capacity development. Last but not the least is the spirituo moral factor. To what extent can this partnership bring about a situation where the individual, family and community awakening becomes a shared objective of not only the people at the grass roots but also who are at the privileged levels of economic and political decision making. We have to approach the 21st century in such a way that spiritual values are harmonised with our materialistic needs.

I am of the view that the Banking Sector could partner with the NGO Sector for the betterment of the downtrodden. But the Banking Sector should not be profit-oriented when such a partnership is offered.

I am aware that banks build up various reserves etc. out of the profits earned. Perhaps, a fair percentage could be set aside as a national development reserve to be utilised in partnership with the NGO Sector. I am sure this would be of tremendous assistance to all people, NGOs, Banks and the Government.

---

*(From a Talk delivered at the Central Bank Training College on 26.1.94 sponsored by SANASA and Foundation for Development Cooperation.)*

## TOWARDS A WORLD OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AND SHARING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*Please elaborate on the meaning of Sarvodaya, which we understand means "awakening,"*

Mahatma Gandhi created the word Sarvodaya, meaning the "welfare of all" from two Sanskrit words: *sarvam*, meaning "all," and *udayam*, meaning "welfare." In Sri Lanka, with our Buddhist outlook, we also understand *udayam* to mean "awakening." So Sarvodaya to us has come to mean the awakening of all people.

Every person can fully awaken one's personality. Every family can fully awaken as a primary social unit. Every rural or urban community, whether consisting of fifty families or a hundred and fifty, can awaken to a better community life. Similarly, a nation of these communities can fully awaken. Together all these national communities can bring about a world-awakening. All these awakenings are interrelated and together contribute to Sarvodaya, the awakening of all. Based on the spiritual, moral, and cultural values of different peoples and countries, a set of guiding principles can be developed for each level of awakening. For Buddhists, the final goal of awakening is supreme enlightenment, or buddhahood.

Buddhism teaches four virtues that lead to awakening: loving kindness, compassionate action, detached joy, and peace of mind. All our welfare and development activities should be motivated by loving kindness. The activities themselves are compassionate action. Their immediate result is the unselfish joy of living. When these virtues become part of our daily lives, we will gain peace of mind. Then, neither gain nor loss, praise nor blame, comfort nor discomfort, pain nor joy, will disturb us or our ability to see everything in depth and with detachment.

Similarly, for family or group awakening, the four virtues that lead to harmony, progress, and happiness are sharing, pleasant speech, constructive activities, and equality. For rural or urban community awakening, these virtues along with the satisfaction of basic human needs help us build just societies in which we can live together in peace.

Similarly, social, economic, and political principles and policies based on those virtues can be developed for larger communities for the awakening of nations. When the Five Cosmic Laws - of genetic systems, climatic cycles, cause and effect, social phenomena, and the mind and consciousness - are understood and used as guiding principles by governments and societies, nature can be protected, pollution prevented, crimes and wars eliminated, poverty eradicated, and human rights and freedoms promoted to the full.

*What prompted you as a young science teacher almost thirty-five years ago to visit poor villages in Sri Lanka and become involved in a network to create a just society?*

I believe anything we do is influenced by three factors: first, our past karma; second, the environment in which we live; third, our own will, or the mind. So, first, I felt that in my past I had done a lot of good, and it was sansaric practice that led me to help other people. Second, in the family environment in which I was raised, my parents were very devout Buddhists and always helped the rest of the community. We were lower-middle-class people who had just enough to eat and lived in our own house. But my parents and my two aunts and uncles who lived with us were very keen to help the poor people in the village. So that environment helped me. As for the third factor, the mind, I was very dissatisfied by the system of education, which didn't reflect our rural culture and values. It was an education that separated the child from the home and the real culture, that promoted competition and the acquisition of power, fame, and wealth, but not good character, spiritual awakening, and service to humanity. It was oriented only toward books, certificates, and jobs, but not toward enlightenment or service to humanity. So I decided when I started life as a schoolteacher that I must broaden the education of my students. They were sixteen to nineteen years old. I told them that education is incomplete unless you go among ordinary people, learn to love them, learn to serve them, learn to be happy in that service, and develop a strong intellect.



*What kind of administration does the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement have? How many staff members are there?*

You have to look at Sarvodaya from two perspectives. One as a movement, that is, people who accept the Sarvodaya way of life and then try to live that way of life and help people. In 8,600 villages we're working with the children, mothers, and farmers in one way or another.

We're organized on several levels. At the national level we have the main organization, the Lanka Jatika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya along with the national supplementary organizations such as the ones doing welfare work. The latter, as independent, officially recognized organizations, look after orphans, old people, the disabled, and victims of natural disasters or communal riots or war. We also have the Sarvodaya Women's Organization, Sarvodaya Shramadana International, and the Peace Brigade. These are all national, independent organizations and not part of any hierarchy. In times of peace, the Peace Brigade trains people in first aid, indigenous medicine, and environmental protection. When disasters occur, like droughts, they rush to the spot and give help. They also set up camps and help hold festivals.

Then we have over 6,000 independent village organizations which we call Sarvodaya Shramadana societies; and also, in between, we have many centres, about 360, in different places.

We have about 4,000 full-time workers who are paid a very small stipend, just enough to live on, and about 50,000 volunteers. Only a very few, like public chartered accountants, have high salaries.

*What has been Sarvodaya's ultimate goal as a movement, since its inception?*

Just as communists have the ideal of a communist society, and capitalists have the ideal of a capitalist society, we have faith in the ideal of a Sarvodaya society, which it is our objective to create. In a Sarvodaya society there are ample opportunities for every individual to satisfy his or her basic material and spiritual needs.



I can do personal meditation and try to work toward the bodhisattva ideal, enlightenment. But for me to do that, society must provide for my basic needs. I should be free, my fundamental rights should be preserved. It should be a nonviolent society. It should be a society that protects the environment. It must be a society whose government is not dictatorial, but democratic. It must be a society without economic exploitation. As for my own personality awakening, there are many other things that should happen. Similarly, family awakening can take place when the surrounding environment is good.

We believe in small communities, where face-to-face communication is possible. The community can then look after its environment, controlling its social, political, technical, and economic environment. Therefore, in a Sarvodaya society, whether it is a village or a city, there must be full freedom for the individual, the family, and the community to evolve, to awaken, and to develop. Now, for that to happen, central political and economic power must be restored to the people. The mass media must not be used to divide people but to bring them together. The media should not just be used to sell products that gratify the senses.

*We have learned that Shramadana means the sharing of labor. How does Shramadana relate to the Buddhist virtues of giving and bodhisattva work?*

Benevolence is the starting point of self-improvement. We try to give benevolence a deeper, broader meaning by not taking pride in giving, by not distinguishing between donor and recipient. We believe only in the reality of the acts of giving and receiving, and not in donors and recipients. The donor also receives, and the recipient also gives. This is how we understand sharing.

Spiritual progress is inconceivable without sharing. The easiest thing to share is labour - sharing our time, thought, and effort. So, to realize a Sarvodaya Society, we started with Shramadana. Thousands of us organized and participated in Shramadana camps all over Sri Lanka to assist poor villages. We dug wells and built roads, houses, community centers, libraries, schools, playgrounds, water and sanitation facilities, water tanks and irrigation works,

and so on to improve the quality of life of our poor brethren. The *jataka* story of Magha Manawaka, a bodhisattva who organized similar community service programs despite government oppression, has always been a source of inspiration to us.

Now we give a much broader meaning to Shramadana. Those who can share other things besides labour can do so in the spirit of sharing. For example a teacher can share knowledge to run a free library or give free classes. A doctor can run a free clinic. A health worker can make a gift of skills to improve people's health. Engineers can share their knowledge for construction work. Landowners can give land to the landless. People with extra food or clothing can give some to those who have little. Lawyers can give free help to those who can't afford to pay for it. The wealthy can use some of their wealth to eradicate poverty. One can donate one's eyes or organs after death. One can teach Buddhism. The Buddha said that of all gifts the gift of the Dharma is the most precious. In the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement we practice all these forms of sharing to uplift all, as bodhisattva practiced.

*We hear that you and your family are often a target of harassment by those who are afraid to lose power. How have you dealt with these people?*

I spoke to them kindly and said they could do anything to me that they wanted to do and that we were prepared to die at any moment. They were threatening us on the telephone. Then they sent threatening letters saying I would be killed if I didn't keep quiet. I had been speaking out against harmful kinds of economic development, pollution of the environment, violence, killing - I was speaking out against these things. I was convinced that we were doing the right thing. Why should anybody want to harm us? We were not doing anything bad.

I don't believe in taking bodyguards with me or anything like that. But I don't do unnecessary, foolish things either, like going where they're dropping bombs. But I would do everything possible, at the risk of my life, to bring peace among people.

### *How does your faith in Buddhism help you to look at things?*

You see, the main thing is Buddhism's very special ability to see all things as part of the whole, as well as going deeper into every little thing. Science and technology don't have that ability. They don't see the whole, but only the parts, and they try to interpret the whole from the parts. The Buddha's teaching looks at the whole as well as at the parts in detail, revealing the harmony. So that's why my childhood training in the Buddhist way of life has helped me to see the world as a whole. Thus the study of science, technology, philosophy, languages, politics, economics - none of these could make me give up my Buddhist principles of being kind, being cooperative, being selfless, being spiritual-minded.

### *How can people of different faiths cooperate effectively to bring about harmony in the world?*

Religion is a name we have given to a kind of system of thought, practice, belief, and so on. The purpose of religion is to eradicate the greed, craving, or ill will we have within us. We Buddhists call it egolessness. Christians will say, "I want to be one with God so that I will have no ego." A Hindu will say, "I want to be one with Mahabrahma or Paramathma." So the desire for egolessness is in these religions, too. The true objective of religion is to lose the ego completely. Unfortunately, religion has lost this essential spirituality. Religion without spiritual awakening is a crime. That is where the problem lies. The problem is that religion itself has become a dividing force. People are killing in the name of religion. What kind of religion is that? But I say every religion should awaken the spirituality in man, and religion should be only a vehicle to do that. We are Buddhists. We don't say that we have no religion, but we use our Buddhism to improve our spiritual values. So when we improve our spiritual values, we don't see any difference between a Buddhist and a non-Buddhist. The whole world is one to us, all the people are one to us, even the animals, because we believe in the potential of every living being to evolve slowly to become a human being and then even become a Buddha. So what is important is therefore to overcome these ethnic, racial, and other problems. We must go all out to awaken the goodness in every human being.

*Do you think Gandhi's and Buddhism's philosophy of nonviolence can contribute substantially to the removal of religious and ethnic antagonisms and armed conflict in Sri Lanka?*

Certainly the philosophy of nonviolence is the only way to reconciliation and peace in our country. Most Sinhalese and Tamils believe in nonviolence, but unfortunately it is not part of the imported social, economic, and political institutions that have over-powered us. These institutions are founded on falsehood, violence, and greed - evils that have become widespread in the country's politics, economics, media, administration, armed forces, and so on. All these spheres are controlled by a handful of rich and powerful people. It is this coterie who foment ethnic and cultural conflicts in order to cling to wealth and power.

We do not believe that Sinhalese, Tamils, or Muslims are really at war with each other. This is the impression given by the ruling elite and the armed separatists. The Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims who are poor and powerless are manipulated by this small rich, powerful, elitist group drawn from all three communities. So the real cause of conflict is the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of a few while the vast majority are poor and powerless.

Sarvodaya with its Buddhist-Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence is contributing in four ways to a lasting solution.

First, Sarvodaya fosters an awareness of the real causes of conflict. Achievement of that awareness is followed by efforts to convince Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim communities that they belong to one big Sri Lankan family whose members should base all their words and deeds on truth, nonviolence, and selfless service.

Second, in over 8,600 villages Sarvodaya has developed programs for Poverty Eradication and Empowerment of the Poor. This will gradually bring economic and political power to democratic, decentralized people's organizations. The people will govern themselves.

Third, Sarvodaya hurries to aid communities wherever there are victims of war. Then Sarvodaya helps with rehabilitation and reconciliation. With the government's help, Sarvodaya joins in reconstruction. Finally, these communities are brought into the normal Sarvodaya village awakening program.

Fourth, Sarvodaya regularly carries on a variety of peace activities, including talks, workshops, seminars, conferences, and mass peace-meditation walks. These programs teach the people as a whole the futility of violence and the rewards of peace and justice. I strongly believe that Buddhism paves the way for practical, global activity for peace.

---

*(When Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne, the founder of Sri Lanka's Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, visited Tokyo in May 1992 to accept the ninth Niwano Peace Prize, Dharma World interviewed him on the movement's origins and its program of Buddhist awakening and economic development.)*



## SARVODAYA SHRAMADANA - SHARING TO AWAKEN ALL

President Rev. Sako Morinaga, Vice President Dr. Hamasaki, Mr. Kamisakamoto, Prof. Nishimura and Rev. Hozuni,

I consider it a great privilege and honour to address the faculty members and students of this historic and prestigious university. The Hanazono University in Kyoto is famous not only in Japan but also in the rest of the Buddhist world because of the contribution it has made to promote the spiritual teachings of Lord Buddha for over 120 years.

I was moved by the fact that most of the young Buddhists who want to become priests of the *Rinzai Zen Sect* of some 5,000 temples are studying Buddhism in this university. I have visited one such temple dedicated to *Mahamaya* in Chiba Prefecture by one of your previous Presidents, Great *Zen Master Mumon - Roshi*, in memory of his mother.

The Great Zen Master *Mumon - Roshi* loved my country Sri Lanka very much and at the age of 80 in 1980 Wesak Full Moon period visited Sri Lanka. Though he is no longer with us his teaching, It is not possible to cover the whole world with cow-hide but it is possible to cover our feet with it' will be remembered for the deep philosophy behind it.

Today more emphasis is given to economic and political relations in the world. But for me the spiritual and cultural relations are more important between our countries and specially between Sri Lanka and Japan. Other relationships should be founded on these two. Because of our Buddhist spiritual and cultural heritage, together we can contribute a great deal to human civilization at this time.

Human beings the world over need a regeneration of spiritual values. It is on this spiritual re-awakening we can build better human societies where violence to human and animal life and the plant kingdom can be prevented. True and sustainable development can only be achieved by building respect for life and nature.

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka is a Peoples' Movement attempting to build such spiritually awakened human beings and societies where all can live in peace with one another and with Nature. 'Sarvodaya Shramadana' means the Awakening of all by sharing one's time, thoughts, labour and resources with one another.

The Sarvodaya philosophy and shramadana action are founded on the ancient teachings of the Buddha and the example of Mahatma Gandhi in modern times. Sri Lanka's Buddhist tradition and practices helped us very much in founding and developing this peoples' movement.

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka is 36 years old. It is active in over 8600 villages out of 23,000 villages in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is a country with a majority of Buddhists but there are Hindus, Muslims and Christians also. By race Sinhala people are in the majority but there are Tamils, Muslims and Burghers also. Sarvodaya belongs to, works with all these communities, cutting across all barriers of caste, race, religion and political differences. It works with all for the well-being of all.

When we started the Movement 36 years ago, from a Buddhist School in Colombo, Nalanda College, our principal objective was to provide an opportunity for our students of age group 16 to 19 years to: (1) live with very poor village communities during vacation time, (2) learn from village people and (3) serve them. So it was a kind of study service project where learning and service were combined to awaken their human personalities, their human personalities. They did this in the form of Shramadana or sharing of labour camps. They lived together with village people, cooked their meals and ate together with them, worked 6 to eight hours a day with them building roads, schools, water and sanitation programmes, irrigation canals and rice fields, community centres wells and so on, and also met together in family gatherings to discuss, talk sing and dance and meditate with them.

This movement of students and teachers to villages to serve their less fortunate brothers and sisters became very popular and hundreds of schools and thousands of teachers and students joined this effort from all over Sri Lanka. It became known the world

over and even foreign volunteers came to join Sarvodaya Shramadana Camps. Within five years, therefore, Sarvodaya Shramadana became a Movement which was both national and international in scope.

The vicious cycle of ignorance, poverty, disease, powerlessness and violence we saw in our rural areas motivated us to state integrated rural development activities in selected very backward villages. We tried to discover the causes that led to this vicious cycle of degeneration and then find out where hope lies and finally develop a path that would help our people to liberate themselves from that condition.

Here we followed the scientific method taught to us by the Buddha to overcome suffering and attain the bliss of Nirvana. That is the Four Noble Truths.

1. There is suffering
2. There is a cause to suffering
3. Suffering can be removed
4. There is a path to the cessation of suffering

Of course we applied this method to overcome immediate worldly problems rather than purely liberation from the cycle of births and deaths with all the suffering that go with it. Even Lord Buddha first fed a hungry person before he preached the Dhamma or the doctrine to him or her.

In 1967 we started with a 100 villages development scheme which progressively expanded every year to reach over 8,000 villages by 1990. In the course of our work we realised as far back as 1971 that the development agencies were faulty and we should define development and implement development programmes in a way that is in keeping with our spiritual values, moral principles, cultural heritage and respect for Nature.

We defined development as an awakening process in the individual, the family, the village community, the urban community, the national community and the world community. This awakening should have a six-fold character. They are the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political aspects.

They should enhance one another and should be integrated. No one aspect should bring about a collapse of or danger to other aspects of development. In other words a sustainable development of man and society without endangering the bio-systems, eco-systems, the environmental purity, societal peace and spirituo-cultural heritage of mankind, was our ideal.

It is easy to have such lofty ideals before us. But it is much more difficult to put such ideals into concrete practice. Still, we believed in the sayings that 'Even to go a thousand miles you have to begin with the first step forward and it is better to light a candle rather than curse the darkness'. So, we initiated practical programmes to put these ideals into practice to build a new man and a new society, with whatever physical and mental resources we could gather from among ourselves. Later people with similar ideals who saw and experienced our efforts from different parts of the world including Japan encouraged us by giving whatever co-operation they could. Some scholars say that the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka is the largest people-oriented voluntary development endeavour in the world today. Whatever it is, in Sri Lanka, Sarvodaya is the largest, people's self-development movement working towards a different, more progressive, peaceful and contented society, based on eternally valid values.

An essential step in the creation of a new social order is the development of human personality itself. The human personality cannot develop in a vacuum. Individuals need the support of the family, peers and the Community. The Community also needs the support of the larger community and the nation and indeed the support of the global community.

Based on our extensive field experience Sarvodaya has postulated a five-stage model of village community development, described very briefly as follows:-

During the first stage by sharing of labour, skills and resources available in the village and accomplishing certain targets such as building a road, repairing an irrigation system or construction of wells for drinking water, a kind of psycho-social infrastructure is built in the village. This helps the community to think together

about their problems and realise the power of self-reliance and collective action.

In the second stage different functional groups such as the children's group, the youth group, mothers' group, the farmers' group land elders' group *emerge* in the village. Leaders of these groups interact with trained Sarvodaya fulltime workers who in turn train them in the Sarvodaya philosophy and the needed skills. Generally at this stage an Early childhood Development Centre is organised in the village to take care of the nutrition, health-care and *psycho-social* development of children.

In the third stage a village level Sarvodaya Shramadana Society is organised which includes all the functional groups. This society is registered with the government as a separate legal entity. The office bearers of this society and other leaders are trained in Sarvodaya training centres spread out all over the country.

During the Fourth Stage emphasis is given to economic development. They start savings and credit schemes and launch economic enterprises development programmes to create employment and generate income to satisfy their basic needs.

In the Fifth Stage the villages are not only capable of carrying out their own development but also help adjoining villages to take to a path of self-development on Sarvodaya lines. A national association known as Lanka Jatika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya, which is a body incorporated by an act of Parliament in Sri Lanka assists these village societies through several special national programmes.

They are:-

1. Early Childhood Development Programme (ECDP)
2. Poverty Eradication and Empowerment of the Poor Programme (PEEP)
3. Sarvodaya Technical Services Programme (SRTS)
4. Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services Programme (SEEDS)
5. Sarvodaya Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, Reconciliation and Reawakening Programme (5R) for the victims of civil strife.



Each of the above programmes has a number of sub-programmes.

Sarvodaya also has developed several other independent national level organisations serving special needs of the people of the country. These include services for the malnourished and orphaned children, elderly people, physically disabled, victims of civil disturbances, alcoholics and drug addicts, and ex-convicts who have been released from prisons. There is also a Sarvodaya Women's Movement, a Peace Brigade (Shanti Sena) a legal Aid Services Programme and a Sarvodaya Shramadana International.

The non-availability of time will not permit me to go to details of these programmes. But you will realise the nature, the variety and the extensity of the work carried out by the Sarvodaya Movement. We were able to successfully develop these programmes due to the support and co-operation we received from our numerous friends and well-wishers both in Sri Lanka and abroad.

On our part while learning and receiving financial and material help from them we also try to share our philosophy and experiences with them. Large numbers of volunteers from other countries including Japan come and work in Sarvodaya villages in Sri Lanka. When they return to their countries they try to start similar activities according to their needs. This means we become members of a global renewal movement to build better human beings and societies. Together all such people and organisations can call themselves a global peoples' movement to build a better world.

The reality of our world is - there is extreme poverty and powerlessness among the majority of the people in the world while a minority has enormous wealth and power. The depletion of natural resources is taking place at a high speed and very soon the entire world population - both rich and poor, powerful and powerless - will find it difficult to satisfy even their basic human needs. The costly, centralised and macropolitical, economic, technological, industrial and commercial structures, human societies have constructed over the last several decades, are unsustainable and are collapsing. If immediate remedies are not

found, the ecological and environmental factors will overtake all the progress humanity has made so far bringing about a global catastrophe.

The governments, private sector industrial and business corporations and people's sector organisations have to agree on a common agenda and work hard and fast if we are to prevent such a global catastrophe. Some principles on which we can work together, as I believe, are as follows:-

- (1) Spiritual awakening of human personality should be foremost in our minds. Every human being should be provided with opportunities to learn and practise the spiritual teachings of their traditions such as the teachings of the Buddha for Buddhists and also a knowledge of other great teachings of world teachers. In Sri Lanka through Dhamma Schools, Meditation Centres and Temples and in family gatherings at Shramadana Camps and Centres we provide this opportunity. Respect for life, compassionate action, altruistic joy of service to others and *equanimity* are the four basic characteristics we try to cultivate to awaken our personalities.
- (2) The human family should be protected and preserved as a basic unit of a new human civilisation. The disruption that is taking place in the family unit primarily as a result of imbalanced economic development programmes and consumerism are bringing about increased crimes, mental disorders, spread of terminal diseases like AIDS and addiction to dangerous drugs and so on. The values of sharing, pleasant speech, constructive action and equality, we learn in our families are increasingly necessary for the survival of the larger society.
- (3) The basic unit upon which peaceful and sustainable national communities and a world community can be built is the small rural and urban community. Still the majority of people live in rural areas as village communities. 100 to 150 families in a community may be the maximum number that can live as 'face to face' people with human qualities. Using all the available technological and communicational knowledge and tools I believe, we can organise the global community on this human

and humane scale. If we try this with rural communities we may be able to discover ways and means of doing the same progressively with highly *alienated* urban people and in small, medium sized and large metropolitan areas in the world. First we have to accept the principle and make a start.

- (4) The Basic Human Needs of all the people in the world should be satisfied by a joint endeavour on the part of the people themselves, the private sector organisations and the governments. No one sector without the commitment and co-operation of the other two sectors can succeed in this effort. Sarvodaya is advocating the satisfaction of Ten Basic Human Needs as a *minimum* package for all the poor people in the world. These needs are those pertaining to Environment, Water, Clothing, Food, Housing, Health Care, Energy, Communication, Education and Cultural and Spiritual needs.
- (5) Basic Human Rights of all the people everywhere as agreed by governments at the United Nations should be guaranteed. This is not happening in most countries specially in poorer parts of the world. In Sri Lanka in addition to the programmes of work I outlined we actively organise campaigns to (1) Protect Human Rights (2) Preserve Democratic Society (3) Uphold the Rule of Law (4) Freedom of the *judiciary* and (5) Freedom of the media.
- (6) Preservation and resuscitation of the Environment and Ecological situation in the world should also be a priority. We should stop the continuing violence done to nature. Governments and multi-national corporations in the world should set the examples for people in general to follow in this area.

Having mentioned six *areas* where the people's sector, private and governmental sectors can work together. I must emphasise the fact that revolutionary and fundamental structural changes in the latter two sectors are necessary for such a co-operation for our survival as a species on this planet. The enormous control they have over the people as far as political and economic systems are concerned should be radically decentralised. The present systems are top-heavy, violent,

expensive land unsustainable. Before it is too late people - centered political and economic institutions should be evolved in such a manner that in spite of the scaling down of the prevailing systems the benefits of science and technology could be received by all in general, without destroying the life-support systems.

It is my fervent hope and sincere belief that all of you teachers and students of the famous Hanzono University will play a leading role in bringing about this change as we come closer to the twenty first century. The word Education symbolises the awakening process I was talking about. Learning may sharpen our sensations and perceptions and give us knowledge on various subjects and fields. But education is the process that leads us to look at our minds, to abstain from evil, to cultivate good land purify the mind itself. That is the Teaching of the Buddha.

If Education provides knowledge without helping us to cultivate wisdom I will not call it education. I am sure you will accept the challenge of our times and re-kindle the spirit of enlightenment of our ancient masters like Guru Ekai Kawaguchi in this century and the World. Let us begin by awakening our own personalities. Its influence will spread globally.

I sincerely thank the President of this University Rev. Soko Norinaga and the Faculty for inviting me, all of you for your patience to listen to me and last but not the least Mr. Kazuto Kamisakamoto, the Secretary of the Asian Cultural Exchange Society, who is like my own brother for enabling me to come here.

*May you live long ! AYUBOWAN !  
May all beings be well and happy !*

---

*Talk delivered by Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne at the Hanzono University in Kyoto on 23rd April 1993.*

## PRACTICAL NON-VIOLENT RESPONSES TO NEW FORMS OF VIOLENCE

The International Human Rights enumerated in the international Covenants of Civil and Political Rights and of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights cover a very broad sweep of human life. In certain respects, they highlight the advances in human thinking about the conditions necessary for human beings to live a more truly human life. One has only to compare, for instance, the content of the present-day human rights covenants with the Code of Hammurabi in Babylonia or accounts of the amphitheatre of the ancient Romans where the general public came to witness the most cruel killings of other human beings as a source of legitimate pleasure to see the immense progress that has been made in what humanity has now generally come to consider to be the ideal rights of all human beings.

Almost every government in the world has given its assent to the concept of human rights giving it a universality that is unprecedented in recorded human history. However, this leaves us with no room for complacency as the degree of suffering in the world is perhaps at a higher level now than at any time in the past. With the enormous increase in human population and the multiplication of the demands placed upon the environment by that population, or sections of that population, the level of violence in the world has registered a massive increase.

The gravity of this fact lies in the hidden dimension of the violence to be found in the world today. It is true that no human society will openly condone the imposition of suffering on other forms of life and openly derive pleasure from its as in the past. Of course, even this statement is debatable as we saw during the war prosecuted by the United Nations against Iraq. The truth is that as the world becomes ever more polarised between a global affluent and privileged minority and a poverty-stricken and powerless majority, new and hidden forms of violence are considered necessary by the former to keep the latter in check. As Mahatma Gandhi said some half a century ago, "if true freedom were to come to India, the hovels of the poor and the palaces of the rich will not be able to coexist for even a moment." There is an appearance of freedom and democracy but the substance of it is



drained away in unseen and hidden ways. Both subtle and crude forms of violence are the greatest violators of human rights. Finding a nonviolent response to violence is our greatest challenge.

### **All-Encompassing Violence**

What are these new forms of violence that impose unjust structures and unjust outcomes on others? We need to go back to the very definition of violence in order to understand what is sometimes not immediately visible to the eye. Any external factor interfering with the normal growth, functioning, and survival of a living organism can be broadly defined as violence. When human society was less sophisticated, we could have confined the meaning of violence to the inflicting of harm by human beings on other human beings in thought, word, or deed. To this type of personal violence, which imposes pain on mind and body, we could have added structural forms of violence through social, economic, and political instruments of control. The most important characteristic of both these forms of personal and structural violence for our purposes was the ability to identify the person or group on whom the violence was imposed.

In the present day, however, the victim need not necessarily be an individual human being or a group. The victim of the new violence can be as small as a living cell or micro-organism that has its integrity, which is the result of millions and billions of years of evolution, violated by the sophisticated instruments of modern science that probe it without having any comprehensive understanding of the probable outcome. On the other hand, the victim can be as big as the planet itself, including the entire biosphere, atmosphere, and stratosphere which humanity is abusing in a manner unprecedented in history. To add to the complexity of the problem, the imposer of the violence and the victim are difficult to identify, and quite often they happen to be both the subject and object of violence.

Those of us who believe in Sarvodaya believe in a concept which is Gandhian origin, meaning the well-being or awakening of all. Ours is a universal thought for the well-being of all life where personal and structural violence as well as identifiable and

unidentifiable violence are neither condoned nor permitted. Our ideal is to create a human society where the human mind and the social, economic, and political institutions created by human beings and their relationship with Nature in its microscopic and macroscopic dimensions sustain themselves with the least opportunity for self-destruction. This demands a reappraisal of the Sarvodaya and Gandhian approaches to counter violence and to disseminate new thinking, techniques, and technologies.

## **Fear Psychosis**

Now I would briefly look at the situation in Sri Lanka as analysed by the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement to which I belong and give a few examples of the processes we are trying to release to ensure peace within human personalities and human communities as also between human beings and Nature itself.

Sarvodaya has worked in the villages of Sri Lanka for over thirty-four years. At present we work in over 8,000 villages which constitute more than a third of the village communities in the country. Sarvodaya is involved in all aspects of community development under ten broad basic human needs. They are: environment, water, clothing, food, housing, health, energy, communication, education, and cultural and spiritual needs.

Sarvodaya means the awakening of all in every aspect of human life. We believe in six aspects of integrated development: at the levels of the human being, the family, the village and urban community, the national and the world community. These are the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic, and political aspects of life. For a world where peace, nonviolence, and justice will prevail, we believe that human beings and society should awaken simultaneously at all these levels.

However, the political and economic mismanagement of our country since independence has resulted in an appalling degeneration of commonly accepted social norms and values which prevailed for at least the two millennia for which we have recorded history. The inevitable result is that in every profession, from teaching to farming and from religion to judiciary, there is a moral and spiritual decay in the quality of the personalities involved in those activities.

The ensuing frustration and desperation conspire to bring about a fear psychosis in which even homicidal tendencies become a means to survive. I will not say that everybody would take it that far. But certainly a substantial minority in Sri Lanka has already demonstrated a frightening capacity to resort to such actions in order to survive. The young people in the southern parts of the country who attempted twice to overthrow the prevailing system by violence and the militant youth and even children in the north who are still on the battlefield clearly demonstrate this fact. The equally harsh and more repressive instruments of official violence are just as much subjected to this fear psychosis and homicidal mania as their opponents. In the meanwhile, the vast majority of people, whatever their political or racial group, are enveloped in fear and even marginally become subscribers to these evil tendencies. The custodians of values, including the religious personalities, are no less victims of this total social malaise.

### **Ruling Coteries**

In our societies the most powerful establishments for changing the course of society for better or worse in the short term are the governments. Even though we call ourselves democratic countries, those who run governments are the political leaders and small coteries of their supporters. To varying degrees and perhaps at a much more intense level than those of others, the survival instinct and fear psychosis get control over them.

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement is not functioning in a vacuum. We work in the reality of this environment. Thousands of our workers, spread across the length and breadth of the country, are a witness to the air bombings, cannon fire, landmine explosions, foot mines, disappearances, burnings on tyres, and unauthorised arrests - all of which constitute nothing but violence and human suffering. They also do witness the apparently carefree and happy-go-lucky affluent lifestyles of a minority who are insensitive to the realities of what is happening in the rest of the country. They zoom about in their air-conditioned cars and enjoy sumptuous meals at five-star hotels as if these are normalities in everyone's life.

In this world of contrasts, of poverty and affluence, of fear and sensuality, any practical response with the intention of having an impact has to be manifold and all-embracing. The portfolio of activities should include the awakening of the personalities of unborn children to the creation of a popular mass of consciousness of the people in the country of critical proportions to enable them to realise the grave situation and the way out of it.

While the physical energies and resources of people and the remnants of sanity still prevailing in social structures are utilised to the maximum, the priority for Sarvodaya is creating a critical mass of spiritual consciousness. With extreme caution, the spiritual energies have to be differentiated and harnessed from religious resources, but taking care not to hurt the religious susceptibilities of people. A kind of socially engaged Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity have to be brought to the fore to get individuals, groups, and communities to practise meditation, cultivate respect for life, and radiate loving kindness far and wide.

Material resources have also to be harnessed and directed to bring about a realisation of the utter futility of violence and the alternative sustainable social system that can be put into place by nonviolence. Satisfaction of basic, secondary, and tertiary human needs can be initiated by releasing processes through constructive nonviolent action, and participatory and sustainable village-level socio-economic structures can be created so that democracy evolves from below rather than imposed from the top.

## **Backlash**

Sarvodaya has initiated these processes in its three decades of work so that its presence as a nonviolent integrated movement for total change is being felt nationally. The surest indication is that in subtle and devious ways the government itself has launched an all-out attack on the movement and its leaders. Throughout our existence we have on occasions been at the receiving end of governmental displeasure. But in the last three years, this has reached an unprecedented level. I will not be exaggerating if I say that no other organisation except one that has embedded itself in the people could have survived the government-sponsored campaign of distortion and obstruction.



The first portent of things to come was when, within a week of the swearing in of the new President, I was interrogated by the chief of the National Intelligence Bureau. The weekly educational radio programme we had conducted for several years was suddenly stopped and TV and radio coverage of our activities was completely blacked out. Then using the excuse of the Presidential Commission to investigate NGOs, the police began to question our workers. Foreign funds pledged to us by donor agencies that also assist the government were blocked by the finance ministry.

This was followed by a calumnious campaign against Sarvodaya and myself personally in the largest circulation government-controlled newspapers in which, among other things, we were falsely accused of selling babies abroad for profit. In the middle of these attacks, my family and I began to receive anonymous death threats and we were followed by unidentified men in vehicles. A very large printing machine we had ordered to print low-cost books for the poor was confiscated by the customs authorities. The Central Bank stepped in to restrict our children's savings programme and rural savings and credit programme and ordered us to return our savings deposits. These are some of the highlights. There are a large number of other obstacles that have been put in our path.

### **Initial Measures**

How are we going to face these new forms of violence which are intended to break our spirit and force us to acquiesce in the injustice that is rampant in our country? From our past experience we have learnt that when there is violence and injustice imposed on us, patiently continuing to do whatever work that can be done helps to diffuse the adversities and the work that was previously being obstructed can be continued. Of course, there is a waste of time and resources on account of the damage that would already have been done.

The injustice and violence have been imposed on us on account of the ignorance regarding the value of the work that we are doing. On the basis of that realisation, we regard awareness creation and conscientisation through educational programmes as having a very useful role to play. Once the ignorance is dispelled,



the erstwhile opponent becomes friendly, subscribes to our ideals, and supports our work. But there are some who cannot be changed this way because they are quite aware of the valuable work that Sarvodaya is doing but still persist in wilfully obstructing our work. If they happen to be administrators working on the instigation of the political authorities and who know very well that they are working against the spirit of the law and justice, then another course of action has to be resorted to, that is, to take resort to courts of law to get justice.

During the present period, Sarvodaya has had to resort to this course of action owing to the continued injustices imposed on us by the abuse of power and vitiation of the law. The difficulty is that there are now an increasing number of laws that are no longer based on the principles of justice, but are drafted and legislated merely to suit the temporary convenience of the government. In like manner, it is possible that judicial appointments will be made not on the basis of merit and justice but rather on the basis of the consideration to further the unjust purposes of the appointing authority. As a result, the general public is losing faith in the law and in the administration of justice. Still, one has to try it out. Only if we fail to get justice by resorting to legal institutions will the next course of action have to be considered. For a nonviolent revolutionary movement like Sarvodaya, this is nonviolent direct action.

However, unlike during the times of Mahatma Gandhi when he launched his nonviolent satyagraha campaign against the British rule in India, at the present time the nonviolent direct action has to be directed against rulers who are a part of the general population of the country. They have used and misused the democratic processes in both a subtle and crude manner and claim democratic legitimacy for their tyrannical attitude towards their opponents. They believe that their election victories give them the right to define their own rules in their own interests. For instance, they have created and used illegal goon squads to intimidate, kidnap, torture, and kill dissenters even if they were unarmed and nonviolent. Therefore to resort to nonviolent direct action is more difficult today than it was during Gandhi's time.

## Final Option

Under today's circumstances, the votaries of nonviolence and social justice have to depend almost exclusively on the spiritual consciousness they can awaken within themselves. They have to aggregate these energies into a critical mass capable of affecting the mass psyche of the general population. The external manifestations of such a course of spiritual action that is directed to bringing about a change will manifest itself in the form of fearlessness and sacrifice.

The final possibility that is open to Sarvodaya is direct political action. Although Sarvodaya does not believe in power and party politics and has stayed away from it ever since its inception, this very system has caused and is causing untold damage to its work. Now the present regime has launched an all-out attack to make the movement ineffective and destroy it completely. But people in thousands of Sarvodaya villages want Sarvodaya to exist and succeed. The people's strength of the organisation has in recent years expanded as a result of the oppression the movement has been subjected to. Therefore it has become both necessary and possible to confront the unjust and violent power and party political system by people's power and replace it by a participatory alternative system of politics. Sarvodaya has decided to take to this kind of political action if all other efforts to bring about sanity and justice do not succeed.

## The Goal

Among the objectives of such a political campaign will be:

- (i) to introduce nonviolence and justice as the fundamental value systems into the political life of the country,
- (ii) to disband the highly concentrated political and economic centres at the top of the hierarchy and re-establish village-level political authorities ensuring protection of people's lives, their properties, life support systems, and the environment,
- (iii) to ensure the justice of laws affecting the general population as against the discriminatory legislation that protects the privileges of a few,

- (iv) to ensure the freedom and integrity of the judiciary and non-interference with the administration of justice,
- (v) to re-establish the dignity and worth of civil servants to function under the law without duress or interference from the political authorities,
- (vi) to ensure the freedom of the press and media so that they can play an independent and investigative role befitting a participatory democracy,
- (vii) to promote a true open economy in which the private sector, the public corporation sector, and the non-governmental and cooperative sector are given equal opportunities and incentives for production, marketing, and financial and resource management, and
- (viii) to promote the evolution of a democratic political system from below where the ultimate objective of an enlightened Sri Lankan community with diverse cultures but equality before law is achieved.

Under the existing constitutional and political realities in Sri Lanka, these objectives cannot be achieved without confronting party political politicians and their institutions. However, the objective of the confrontation is not to grab power. It is to ensure the achievement of the objectives sketched out above. Therefore, Sarvodaya has decided to form a political organisation and get it registered under the Commissioner of Elections so that if the present regime continues, it can be challenged electorally.

I have concentrated on the tragic issues directly affecting human life in Sri Lanka and the immediate socio-political issues relating to the need for a nonviolent alternative. This does not mean that we should give less importance to the violence inflicted upon our life support systems by inappropriate applications of science and technology. Violence done to living cells, to human beings, and to the planet as a living organism should also be our constant concern.

## MAHATMA GANDHI MEMORIAL LECTURE

When I see several thousands of you gathered here to listen to the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Lecture that I am asked to deliver I am very moved for several reasons. Firstly, because all of you except the Honourable Minister, the Members of Parliament and high government officials, are village people. Secondly, you are not merely paying lip service to a great human personality. You are attempting to live up to the eternal principles that Mahatma Gandhi taught us and are trying to build up a Sarvodaya social order he believed in, with your own sweat and labour.

You are gathered here from many villages and have celebrated the 126th birth anniversary of the Mahatma by doing a variety of activities including the new two mile road you completed by shramadana working for several days. Thirdly, you have taken up very seriously the Gandhian teachings of Truth, Non-violence and Self-sacrifice in your work. You are trying to transform society by using good means. Gandhiji always said to achieve Good Ends Good Means have to be used. For all these reasons I say I am very moved when I stand before you.

From October 2nd last year upto now I have given several talks on Mahatma Gandhi and his work to many audiences, mostly very educated ones, in United States, Switzerland, Germany, Japan, Singapore, and even in India. This is the first commemoration meeting I am addressing in a rural setting where ordinary village people are the sponsors, listeners and participants. Most of all you are putting into practice what Gandhiji taught. So what I will be talking to you will be purely on how we can continue to follow his example, walk on his footsteps and become better human beings in a better society we build.

Mahatma did not believe in the kind of social orders that existed at the time he was living, namely, the capitalist system and the communist system. Both these systems had certain features which he did not accept. Centralisation of political and economic power, indiscriminate use of high technology, the individual human being becoming only an insignificant digit in large scale institutions, lack of spiritual and moral values giving pride of place to economic growth and per capita income rather than the



welfare of the poorest of the poor first, consumerism, waste, keeping big armies to protect the people and the state and so on.

He believed in a completely different social order where basic needs of all the people would be satisfied, dignity of labour would be held in high regard, every person acquiring as many skills as possible to use one's body and not only the brain, rather than increasing one's greed to strive to satisfy one's needs, bring down the economic and political power from the centre to the village. Gandhiji wanted the 700000 villages in India at that time to work towards village self-government or Gramswaraj. Then he believed that India could be converted into a Commonwealth of Village Republics. Such a society where the well-being of all would be ensured he called it "Sarvodaya"

When he read John Ruskin's book "Unto this Last" he translated that into his mother tongue as "Antyodaya", which means the welfare of the last in the society. However, later he coined the word Sarvodaya meaning the Welfare of All.

For the last 4 decades, we have been trying to build the kind of society Gandhiji envisioned for India. India is a very very large country with a very large population. Therefore, Sri Lanka in every respect, we believe, can translate Gandhiji's ideals into practice. We launched on this gigantic task with lot of confidence and commitment. I am sure that you will agree with me that next to the government of Sri Lanka which has at its disposal vast local and foreign resources and the authority, Sarvodaya has done more work to uplift our people than any other organization in this country.

Sarvodaya means You, the People. Your work has inspired hundreds of other community leaders in foreign countries to take to the Gandhian non-violent and constructive path to self-development and peace.

I was a young teenager going to Mahinda College when I suddenly heard that Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by an extremist racist criminal. I was at a railway station at that time and I still remember how everybody gathered there including myself cried as if a person who was near and dear to us was killed. This



reaction was there all round the world. The greatest human being who tread this earth, after perhaps the Lord Buddha, thus was no more. But "Mahatma dead" was more powerful than "Mahatma alive". Even I started reading about him and learning about his Experiments With Truth, which was the name he had given to his biography. From that day, all over the world people started building faith in non-violent ways of resolving problems. This is exactly what I too started doing from that day in my youth.

Even though I had not seen Mahatma Gandhi in flesh and blood, I have seen and even have spoken to his political heirs as well as spiritual heirs. He built up greatest political leaders of the calibre of Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Sri Vallabhai Patel, Prime Minister Shastri and so many other political leaders of whom any country can be proud of, were tutored by Mahatma. Even our own leaders who won political freedom for Sri Lanka were all inspired by mahatma and his followers.

His main spiritual heir was Acharya Vinoba Bhave. I was fortunate to meet him several times and learnt from him the basic principles of Sarvodaya. I must not forget here Sri Jayaprakash Narayan, Sri E. W. Ariyanayagam, Ashadevi Ariyanayagam, Dr. R. R. Divakar, Dr. G. Ramachandran and several other followers of Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave, visiting Sri Lanka and helping us during the initial stages of our movement. Today, after nearly 40 years of going on the path of Sarvodaya, we are also inspiring other communities in the world who are committed to non-violence, peace and self development.

Now let me speak a few words on what we have achieved so far following Gandhiji's teachings and what we are doing now to continue to build a social order following a non-violent constructive path.

In Sri Lanka, we harmonized Gandhiji's teachings with our Buddhist-Hindu tradition on which Sri Lankan culture evolved over the last several thousand years. We defined Sarvodaya as the Awakening of All. Then again, we set before us six separate but integrated objectives. First is Poorna Paurushodaya or the Total Awakening of Human Personalities. Second is Kutumbodaya or

Awakening of the Family Unit. Third is Gramodaya - Gramaswarajya or the Awakening of Village Communities and the establishment of Village Self-government. Fourth is Nagarodaya or the Awakening of Urban Communities in the same manner as villages but with different strategies. Fifth Deshodaya or National Awakening or integrating and networking all village communities where we are working to give a national character and dimension and to bring about a national awakening. Sixth is Vishvodaya or getting ourselves linked up with similar non-violent constructive organizations or movements in the world for World Awakening.

To realise each of these objectives, we developed integrated activities in six sectors, namely, the spiritual moral cultural social economic and political. This is what Gandhiji expected to do to build the ideal social order which he called Sarvodaya. All of you have to remember that what we are doing is not a kind of do-gooding or simple social service but transforming our society to build an alternative way of life. You who are gathered here have participated in formulating and implementing these programmes. The Government of Sri Lanka have adopted a number of programmes we have developed. Similarly, quite a number of community leaders from abroad have come and shared our experience. You should be proud of this and continue to work harder.

For the role I played, it was mentioned here that, I have received 10 international awards. Mahatma Gandhi set an example in what he called Aparigraha or non-possessiveness as a great virtue. Therefore, the monetary part of the awards I gave away to the Sarvodaya movement. I did not want a single cent to be taken for my use because tens of thousands of people in this country have contributed to bring up Sarvodaya for what it is today. In the last 12 months alone, over 3 million of you in this country, have participated in Sarvodaya work in one way or another which benefited not only you but almost 6 million others. So in a country with a population of 18 million people, the Sarvodaya visibility is very high and what you have achieved has contributed in every respect to build up our country and our people.

You know that we are now working in 10,130 villages. 1000 of these villages are called Pioneering villages. Each Pioneering village should have a leadership that can support 4 surrounding Intermediary villages and 5 other Peripheral villages. In other words, 10 villages should work together as a cluster assisting and cooperating with one another. Gandhiji talked of expanding the work of every village in oceanic circles. This is exactly what you are doing. These villages need three kinds of empowerment, namely, social, technological and economic empowerment. We cannot eradicate poverty or injustices unless we are empowered in all these three sectors. In a way this is a kind of self empowerment as every village is getting their own young people trained in these three sectors in appropriate ways.

For an individual or a group or a society no problem is caused by an isolated reason. There are many factors interacting and contributing to create a particular situation, problem or crisis. Therefore, we have to attack the problem on all fronts and remove the causes that have given rise to the problem. Poverty, ill-health, competition, environmental degradation, terrible health problems such as AIDS, terrorism and drug addiction and the civil war are all inter-related problems. That is why Sarvodaya has 27 major programmes being implemented in an integrated way. We may emphasise at one particular time or one particular occasion one programme more than the others. But please remember that all these are inter-related. Before I conclude I must refer to the communal dissensions that originated in our country a few decades ago which have resulted today in terrorism and full-scale civil war. This is a very unfortunate situation in our country. We all have to get together and find a non-violent strategy by which this problem can be resolved. In this respect Mahatma Gandhi stands out like a beacon light in darkness. He devoted his entire life to teach the equality of all human beings. No human being has a right to impose his will on another human being. No human being should be treated with disdain or discriminated against because of his birth.

Gandhiji selected a very remote village in the central part of India and called it Sevagram and made it the headquarters of the Indian freedom struggle against the British. He treated caste differences with contempt and did everything possible to uplift the

condition of the so-called outcasts. You may remember when we started our work, we first worked among so called outcast communities. We broke through the caste barrier and now the present generation has completely eliminated discrimination on grounds of caste.

Gandhiji fought against racial discrimination. He wanted all races in India to live as equals and as children of Mother India. Unfortunately due to the vastness of India it could not be accomplished completely but he showed the way. As far as Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka is concerned we can be proud that all communities in our country irrespective of caste, race, religion or linguistic background are working together in Sarvodaya as members of the same human family.

During the time of insurgency in the south and the present civil war in the north and east, we have been working together without allowing any differences to come on our way. Both the government armed forces and the anti-government armed groups still respect the integrity of Sarvodaya and its firm faith in non-violence and service as the way towards a lasting solution. So we can work together anywhere.

Please inculcate in your lives the compassion and service Gandhiji taught us. The best way to remember him and pay respect to his name is to serve your fellow beings.

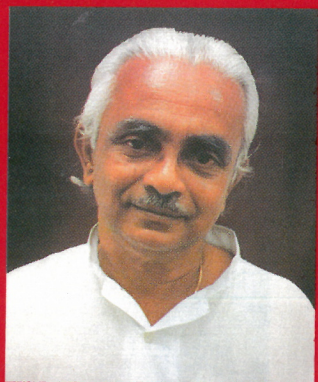
*May you all be well and happy.*

---

*(A free rendering from a speech made by Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne at the 126th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi at Yakkalamulla, Galle District, on 2nd October 1995.)*







Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne is the Founder/Leader of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka. Four decades ago, he worked in a rural village and together with the people, developed a philosophy and a Movement which is known as Sarvodaya. In it, the awakening of everyone is symbolised. Today it has spread into many parts of Sri

Lanka and to some parts of the world too.

Ariyaratne was inspired by Vinobha Bhave and Mahatma Gandhi. Buddhistic experiences in Sri Lanka were added to this inspiration. Today the Movement works for everyone, regardless of race, creed, caste or colour. It is a unique philosophy based on potential greatness of human beings.

In these seven volumes what Ariyaratne wrote during the last four decades are collected. The beginning of Sarvodaya and its gradual development are reflected here. As Ariyaratne travelled around the world the influences he encountered and how he looked at such influences are seen in these volumes. The essays are refreshingly original and they contain what man should do in order to establish peace within himself and with the world. Ariyaratne's essays are a tribute to his spiritual explorations into himself and into the world.

---

A SARVODAYA VISHA LEKHA PUBLICATION

ISBN 955-599-081-6

Price: Rs. 200/=

  
**VISHVA LEKHA**  
*Printers*